

SNOW WHITE, THE WOLF, AND THE UNICORN

The Structural Origins
of Western Culture



William D. Marsland
and
Amy L. Marsland

SNOW WHITE, THE WOLF,
AND THE UNICORN
The Structural Origins of
Western Culture

by

William D. Marsland and
Amy L. Marsland

Why is a Unicorn?

Who is the Fool?

What is a pack of cards?

Is ancient belief no more than a mass of superstition—animism, totemism, sun and nature worship? Or does it conform to a pattern extending from Sumer of 3000 B.C. to the contemporary Italian peasant's "vecchia religione"?

Starting from the fairy tales which so fascinated the Grimm brothers, the authors supply a new and convincing analysis of preliterate cultural and religious structures, offering answers to questions which Frazer's *Golden Bough* and Levi-Strauss' *Savage Mind* leave unanswered.

Their book, however, not only offers illuminating insights into the thought of the Western world before Christ and literacy, but has major relevance for the study of the Middle Ages.

It will change the reader's perspective of our times.

ADB
0012119
20-

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation



SNOW WHITE, THE WOLF, AND THE UNICORN

**The Structural Origins
of Western Culture**

*To the Barnes -
Amy Branland*

SNOW WHITE, THE WOLF, AND THE UNICORN

**The Structural Origins
of Western Culture**

**by
William D. Marsland
and
Amy L. Marsland**

First Edition

Library of Congress Catalog No. 81-81618

Copyright © 1981 by Amy Marsland and William Marsland

All rights reserved

Libra Publishers, Inc.
391 Willets Road
Roslyn Heights, New York 11577

Manufactured in the United States of America

ISBN 0-87212-150-x

This little book is a popularization and condensation of a study nearly 1000 pages long, exclusive of notes and bibliography, which my wife and I wrote some years ago. It was based on certain insights and theories I evolved while I was studying for a doctorate in medieval literature at the State University of New York in Binghamton.

Along the way I dropped the project and moved on to other activities, telling myself I might pursue the study again when I retired. My wife is made of sterner stuff and her determination to share our findings with others never flagged. Though based on my initial research and our earlier joint studies, this version is entirely hers and I salute and thank her for it.

William D. Marsland

CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. A Pattern in Apples	1
2. Werewolves and Other Walkers of the Wild Woods ...	9
3. The Winter Underworld	21
4. A Royal Summer	34
5. Some Perilous Passages	48
6. Festival	58
7. The Left Hand and the Right; and Neither	73
8. (Or 7 + 1	91
9. Afterthought	98
What Is a Pack of Cards?	
Why is a Unicorn?	
Who is the Fool?	

SNOW WHITE, THE WOLF, AND THE UNICORN

**The Structural Origins
of Western Culture**

Chapter 1

A PATTERN IN APPLES

Once upon a time, there was a little girl called Snow White who had a wicked stepmother. The wicked stepmother sent her into the woods with a Huntsman to have her killed, but he brought back the heart of a young boar instead, and Snow White grew up in the woods with a bunch of red-hatted dwarves till her stepmother, in the guise of an old peddler-woman, knocked on her door with a basket of apples and offered her a bite of a poisoned one, whereupon she dropped down apparently dead. However, a prince came along, jiggled her coffin; she coughed up the bit of apple and, coming to life, married him.

Once upon a time there was a girl called Persephone who was out picking narcissus when a god of the underworld known as Hades or Pluto came along and carried her off to live with him. Her grieving mother Demeter, sometimes goddess of apple orchards, sought for her everywhere and eventually discovered her, winning Pluto's consent to bring her back to earth. However, because she had eaten one seed of a seedy apple while underground, she had to return to Pluto six months of the year.

Once there was a Celtic prince called Conn-Eda whose wicked stepmother sent him to the underworld to find three golden apples, a black horse, and the dog of the Fairy King of the underworld. When he returned triumphant he became king of an earthly kingdom to which the apples brought unimaginable fertility.

The Celtic Cuchullain had adventures with apples, too: testing his strength in the underworld, he had to carry a wheel and an apple and run as fast as the wheel rolled or he would stick to the Perilous Plain. In another adventure, he killed King of the Underworld, CuRoi MacDaire, by cutting in two an apple in the belly of a magic salmon which only appeared every seven years. Only when the apple was cut could he sever CuRoi's head.

Hercules and Eurystheus, too, as young men set off in quest of the magic apples of the Hesperides, and Freyr of Scandinavia offered twelve golden apples to giantess Gerda so that she would marry him. And a couple called Adam and Eve, living in innocence in a garden as splendid as that of the Hesperides, took a bite of an "apple," became conscious of sex, and were rudely catapulted into the real world (just as brides are today after they wear the appleblossom crown).

Why?

Why is the apple the fruit, as Jakob Grimm of the Grimm Brothers puts it, "on the eating of which depend life, death and metamorphosis"?

Apples are the oldest fruit; along with berries, wild apples were eaten in prehistoric times, and cultivated long before apricots, oranges or pears were thought of. Persephone's pomegranate was not an apple, but so closely did the concept of fruit and apple coincide that it was called "the seedy apple." The "golden apples" of the Hesperides and Atalanta's race with her suitors may have been oranges, but they were called apples. So the apple became the fruit par excellence of myth and ritual and still retains its magic connotations today. In some places in France the supersitition lingers that apples may not be eaten on Holy Friday, or at Christmas; in other places, they are sold at Easter as a cure for fever. And in America at Hallowe'en, children still bob for them.

Let us consider for a moment the life cycle of the apple. First it is seed, then blossom, then fruit; and the picked fruit returns to seed again. As seed, fallen fruit at the foot of the medlar tree, it is on its way to the underground; as blossom and fruit, hanging above amid green leaves, it is aboveground.

In our stories, apples do a good deal of upping and downing too. Snow White downs a bite and dies; coughing it up, she comes to life again. Persephone is held down by her pomegranate seed, but when the seed is not operative, in the time of flower and summer, she walks again on the earth. Conn-Eda's apples are in the underworld; they have to be brought back up before crops sprout and orchards ripen. MacDaire's

magic apple is buried for seven years in the belly of the salmon in the depths of the sea; the salmon has to be landed before the apple can take effect.

In all the ancient world, the concept of these two realms inhabited by the apple—underworld and “this world” or upperworld—is familiar. These are the horizontal divisions of the universe, along with a third “heaven” which is, a good deal of the time, indistinguishable from the underworld. The underworld is the world of death (the apple falls and rots) but also of germinating birth as seed sprouts again: Pluto is god of fertility and riches as well as of the shades. In the underworld also live all kinds of creatures who make their home in water, earth or cave: Cuchullain’s salmon, for instance, or the snakes of baby Hercules, or Snow White’s dwarves who, for all they are usually shown living in a woods cottage, in any proper tale inhabit a cave.

But the apple has to come up before it does any good; and when do apples come up? In spring. So fall to spring is the season of the underworld, and from spring to fall, when apples blossom and hang high, the season of this world.

But there is more to this analogy. All these apple-hunters are young bachelors, the apple-girls maidens; it is only when the apple comes up that Snow White or the brides in their apple-blossom wreaths get married. The unmarried too, then, seem to “belong” to underworld-winter, while in summer they, like the apples, cross-fertilize and produce crops.

Who else belongs to the underworld? CuRoi, of course, and Pluto, sometimes shown youthful, sometimes as an old man—and always with a hat rather like that of the dwarves with the tip chopped off. This is the modius, a sort of leather pail for measuring grain-seed, turned upside down. Persephone too—the cornucopia full of fallen fruit, seed for the new year, belongs to her as well as to Pluto—and to the Greeks she is not only maiden, but the black witch Hekate.

How about Snow White’s stepmother, then? she is something of a witch, certainly, in her black gown with her magic mirror; and the basket in which she carries her poisoned apples is identical to the winnowing basket of the Greeks which served

at once as cradle for the new seed and, in the threshing ceremony, for the Baby of the New Year.

The "woodwives" of German lore, young wood witches, carry apples in baskets too; one of the three Mother Goddesses of Gaul carries a basket of fruit and a cornucopia. So Stepmother is certainly a witch as well as a Bad Apple.

The "Old Roger" of the English folk-song "Old Roger Is Dead," who comes to life when the apples fall off the trees, must be an underworld figure too then; and so, perhaps, is the "old woman" of the song who comes picking the apples up in her basket. And the "Straw Man" of Beauce, hung up on the apple-tree in late April and burned when apple harvest comes, must be Old Roger's opposite, a figure from "this world." And in fact he is called "Le Grand Mondard"—"the great world man."

What is going on here?

A system—simple and universal throughout the ancient west and mid or near east—which categorized the world in pairs of contrasting opposites: summer-winter, aboveground-underworld, and young versus adult, in which every living creature, plant and animal was assigned a role in one half or the other, even apples; a system which marked the transition from one season to the other by great festivals to whose descendants (Easter, Hallow'en) magic apple traditions still cling; and a system which, at the same time, marked age-class transitions from maturity to old age and from youth to maturity and marriage so forcefully that the bride still approaches the altar wearing her coronet of apple-blossoms.

Where does this system begin? Back, far back beyond our earliest imagining, already alive in Egypt and Babylonia, and probably in the "first towns" of Jericho and Catal-Huyuk before them. So old, indeed, are its manifestations that we can well believe it was man's original way of analyzing the world around him: the Venus of the paleolithic cave at Lausel wears its emblems, and Neanderthal bear-worship may find an echo in the spring "bear-killing" festival of medieval Venice and contemporary Arles-sur-Tech in the Pyrenees. Thought itself may not

predate this concept that each thing has its opposite, and that the union of two contrasts is the only way in which the universe can be comprehended.

Yet "concept" is perhaps too anemic a term. A tapestry is a concept, too, but it is also a richness of texture, a weave of color, a balance of forms which shadow forth men, animals, trees and seas. A farm is also a concept, but it sparkles green in the rain, smells of pigs, its fields are rough and smooth by turns, its farmhouse is shaped inward and out by people, winds and the rock or forest of its soil. And the farm has pattern: so many pigs to so many people, so many apples to feed so many pigs, so many people to tend so many apple trees. Our concept uses symbols, but they are symbols which taste, touch, scent, act, can be held in the hand and the eye. Most of us buy our apples at the supermarket, apple = apple to us, no more; but to our ancestors "apple" implied seed, tree, fruit, sowing and harvest: the word evoked scent, bite, field, home, and a progression of the seasons. And the pattern in which the symbol "apple" is used has at once an earthy, functional integrity, like the farm, and an aesthetic meaning, like the tapestry.

Winter, is, for instance, winter. Anyone can tell by the chill, the slant of the sun, the bare tree, that winter is here; and what a contrast with summer! But winter with its long hours of darkness is also surely a kind of night, and summer a day. In the underground, if one penetrates it at the mouth of a cave, it is dark too, so winter = night = underworld. Creatures that live in the underworld—snakes in the crevices of rocks, rabbits in their holes, frogs and fish in the dark depths of the sea—must then belong to winter and night, however often we see them by day; the eagle that soars in the sun is day, summer and this world; the owl of night belongs to winter and witches who, since their powers are not of this world, must obviously belong to the other.

Ah, but people! how are we to categorize them? since they are not only of two sexes but three sorts: the adults, who do the work and hold the ordering of this world; and children and the old, who do not. Adults, who till the summer fields and take the warpath as soon as the weather allows, must be sum-

mer people. Then the old and young belong to underworld, night, and winter. And is there not confirmation for this since, busy as we are, we let our elders, fit for no more heavy task, undertake the nurturing and the teaching of the young—and is this not done more intensively in winter, when the long nights offer plentiful time for tale-telling and reciting of genealogies? So, upon the pattern of everyday life is woven a tapestry of fancy as logical as the change of season itself, and to this day we talk of “the spring of her youth” and “the winter of his old age.”

Now, what are Snow White and Conn-Eda and their wicked stepmothers up to? Initiation—not simply a rite which savage tribes celebrate with circumcision or knocking out a tooth—but a major event in life which our ancestors marked in the woods and steppes long before their tales of it emerged in the Germanic or Celtic world. Winter dies and spring revives: so, at coming of age, the young die to their old selves and take on a new adult personality. Death and rebirth—a solemn transition which, at the great festivals, must be celebrated for people as well as seasons. Snow White eats of the poisoned apple, dies and comes to life again; Conn-Eda, descending to the underworld, wanders among the dead as does Persephone; for Hercules, the adventure is couched in terms of a voyage to an unknown land. Among the young women, this perilous passage is preparation for sex, marriage and childbirth; for the man, it is a more arduous ordeal which involves proving his courage and dexterity in war as well as his civic wisdom. So the test requires trophies and, almost invariably, a conflict with some fierce animal like Conn-Eda’s black horse or Hercules’ Cerberus, Dog of the Underworld.

Cuchullain, in his saga, fights just another such dog, but he also slays CuRoi and his salmon—kills in fact the King of the Underworld himself so that winter may die and spring return again. So Snow White and Conn-Eda outwit and supersede their stepmothers, spring supplanting winter, the young the old.

Yet these step-parents, these dark kings, are not all evil: closely related to their young enemies, are they not the young

themselves in disguise? Snow White's stepmother sees in the magic mirror "the fairest of them all"; one day it is the wicked queen, the next Snow White, soon to be queen herself. So in Babylon, when young Marduk came to power with the spring sun and slew the dragon of chaos, the old god Nergal of the underworld died and then came to life again as a young man like Marduk. And the face of the old witch is sometimes a tender one: Berhta, the Christmas witch of German paganism, takes the apples from her basket and gives them to good children at Christmas, and the French Tante Arie does the same. Cinderella's white-haired fairy godmother who united her with her prince, and Snow White's wicked stepmother who indirectly united her with hers, are one person in two different guises; so are Santa Claus and the black imp who, in German lands, accompanies him to carry off bad children.

Why this ambivalence? The answer lies in the social context, where the kind teacher of children becomes at initiation time the terrifying supernatural figure who shuts the young up in the dark initiation hut, supervises the dangerous tests of courage, the mock death, which transform youth to man and maid to matron.

Snow White and Cinderella wed and mount the throne hand-in-hand with their loved rescuers; Conn-Eda becomes king, Cuchullain king's champion. The kings and queens of this world succeed, for a summer, to those of the underworld. A metaphor: are not every husband and wife king and queen in their own household? A metaphor, but also a political reality: in Egypt, Babylon and Europe the inauguration of the new king echoed in its preliminary dark vigil, its contests and races, the initiation festival of ordinary youth.

In Babylon, each spring, as Marduk fought the dragon and ousted old Nergal of winter, the king too was struck in the face, deprived of his emblems, mated anew with his queen as goddess of the land in sacred marriage; and scholars speculate whether he, as Marduk, did not fight the mock dragon in person. Frazer's "Divine King" who is slain, brought to life, and crowned with circlet or wreath of flowers bridelike at the village May festival is also the King himself and the king the God, dying as Marduk-

youth and Nergal-old-man to become Orderer of the Earthly Universe. So god, king, peasant repeat in parallel dance the cycle of the seasons, playing in turn the roles of spring youth, summer ruler, winter wisdom.

But in the social structure there are three classes as well as three ages: peasant, warrior, "older" in Babylon; priest, carl and jarl in Scandinavia; Druid, noble and peasant in the Celtic world; everywhere the pattern is the same. In the beginning "elder" is "priest" and priest elder: who but the old have the wisdom to approach the gods safely? Noble and king are two facets of the same concept, the king a noble, the noble king in his own county.

Is there a connection too between peasant and youth? Snow White in youth is servant to the dwarves, Hercules servant to Eurystheus, Cuchullain a blacksmith's assistant. The word "knave" in old German applies alike to peasant and youth; the Latin "paganus" gives rise both to "peasant" and "page"—a noble child in training. And what these two words may have to do with the knave of hearts and the appellation "pagan" we shall perhaps see later on.

So there is a pattern in apples, and here it is:

apple seed	apple blossom	apple (tree)
winter	spring	summer
underworld		upperworld
night		day
single		married
old man, witch	young	adult

And, tentatively, we can perhaps add dwarves, dogs of the underworld, black horses and dragons too on the left hand side of this chart, along with the witch's basket. Let's see.

Chapter 2

WEREWOLVES AND OTHER WALKERS OF THE WILD WOODS

What constitutes proof is always a variable. There is deductive proof ("all the grass I've ever seen is green, so the next grass will be too"); inductive proof ("all the grass I've seen so far is green so all grass is green.") There is experiential proof (the car stops, you wiggle up the gas feed, the car starts, so it *was* the gas feed) and experimental proof, cause invariably leading to result. Some people prefer their proof in literary form, some in charts; and there are some people no proof will convince because the thesis contradicts a view in which they have invested great emotional capital.

Clearly, what we have said in the last chapter cannot be proved experimentally: it is just not possible to transform a technological society into a preliterate one and see if it thinks the way we have said it does. The sort of proof we are using is inductive: we collect a heap of mythical apples and draw from it certain conclusions about apples and what they mean. It is also, to some extent, deductive: the meaning once widely established, we see if it fits other apples and their contexts. It is the kind of double reasoning, in fact, one uses to do a jigsaw puzzle: by collecting several similar pieces you conclude this section is a cloud, but perceiving it is a cloud also allows you to find missing pieces.

In some sense, too, the proof must be and is experiential. If, completing your pink cloud section of the puzzle, you find it is not in the sky but on the ground, you reason it must then be not a cloud but a heap of fallen apple blossoms. And you draw this conclusion not from the puzzle in itself, but from an immense range of personal experiences with reality. So with what we are saying: the ultimate test of its truth is not does it "hang together," but does it fit what we know of preliterate societies today and our own ancestors; does it work to illuminate puz-

zling obscurities in history and art; does it enrich and clarify our knowledge of ourselves.

A fairy tale stands at one edge of our experience of living; a graph or chart at the other. The thought-system we are talking about can be expressed in either, encompasses both.

Once upon a time, the mother of a girl named Red Riding Hood told her to take a basket of goodies to her grandmother who lived in the woods. An obedient daughter, she put on the red cloak for which she was named and started off through the forest, where she met a wolf of dubious character. He learned her errand and, for some peculiar reason, instead of eating her up on the spot he went to grandmother's house and ate *her*, planning to save Red Riding Hood for dessert. Disguising himself in grandmother's bonnet, he hopped into bed and when she came, tried to lure Red Riding Hood to him, "the better to eat you up, my dear"; but luckily at just the right moment a Woodcutter or a Hunter came along to save the girl and, slitting the wolf's belly, he enabled grandmother to pop out as good as new.

If you suspect that behind this innocent and improbable tale lurks a ritual meaning, you are not wrong. Red Riding Hood's cloak, her basket, the wolf, the Woodcutting Hunter and grandmother are involved in a ceremonial dance which has been going on in literature ever since, in the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh, the hairy Eabani and his royal friend Gilgamesh killed the giant Huwawau in the Land of Cedars and cut down a magic tree. In real life the dance has been going on for a lot longer than that, and it is called Initiation.

"Initiation" is a term which calls up visions of primitive tribes, tattoos, circumcision and bullroarers by night in a setting far removed from the steppes and valleys of Europe; but initiation is inseparable from an age-class system and once almost every country in the west, as naturally as breathing, divided its male citizens into three classes: the young, the full citizens and warriors, and the elders. In Babylonia and Egypt, and even further back than that in the late and early stone ages in Europe, the indications are that the same divisions

existed, and that the change from one stage of life to another was originally marked by a "rite of passage"—an initiation.

The specifics of initiation vary from place to place and from time to time, but three things can be said about all of them:

1. For the young males, initiation was always preceded by a period of instruction in citizenship lasting anywhere from several months to several years, which included training in sports, games and warfare, and in the myths and genealogy of the social group. All or part of this training was carried on away from village or city, in the woods or the wilds, and a period of seclusion apart from civilisation invariably preceded the initiatory rites.

2. The initiation itself involved both public and private rites, the public demonstration of the skills the young men had acquired, and a private ceremony enacting a loss, a conflict, and a death-and-rebirth.

3. After the initiation came the celebration: the young men received admiration, gifts, and as the most important of these gifts, social approval of their sexual coming of age. The unmarried girls of the tribe were now theirs to mate freely with until such time as they settled down to marriage.

Why the story of Red Riding Hood takes place in the woods is now clear—and perhaps why the wolf preferred waiting for her in bed to eating her earlier; but neither the fairy tale nor the analysis of initiation are imaginatively satisfying when we try to envision the young men our ancestors, how they were taught and what happened at initiation. History here must be our intermediary.

When we go back to the Athenian educational system, it sounds more like school today than the early pattern we have been describing. Boys underwent training in two stages: from the priests they learned geography, history and poetry, then graduated to study of the use of arms. But some primitive traditions still lingered: as a group they wore the same costume, the younger boys black, the older white; and when they were ready to graduate they jointly participated in a spring sacrifice to Dionysos, whose own experiences as a young man included a time of training away from his family, a testing of his valor

and skills, a conflict and a duel to the death at his coming of age.

In Sparta, the lineaments of an older tradition are more marked. At the end of the first stage of a youth's training his head was shaved and at the end of the second he underwent a period of seclusion outside the city. At his graduation he was scourged before the temple altars—a personal testing of courage so harsh some died of it; but if he survived he enjoyed the rights of full citizenship and, as a mark of adulthood, was allowed to live at home with his wife.

Head-shaving, testing, mating, the putting on of the "toga virilis" in Rome, are echoes of an older tradition we encounter also on Greek Crete in the term "the herd" applied to the boys in training, the seclusion just before coming of age which earned them the name of the "secret ones," and the participation in the men's races which marked their graduation.

But these late rites are only a crooked mirror to the originals. *Art of the Steppes* author Karl Jettmar, identifying young men's age classes among the Persians, Scythians and Parthians, says, (214) "Communal ownership of women, ascribed in Greek legend to some peoples of Central Asia, was probably not characteristic of entire peoples, but was rather one of the customs of such groups of young people." Both the Fianna, among the Celts, and the Berserker among the Teutons, had exclusive right to the young unmarried girls unless a father or adult suitor "ransomed" one. Celtic youths were tutored in law, genealogy, poetry and magic by the Druids and, a contemporary Roman author tells us, this teaching took place in "remote woods and valleys." The story of their famous leader Finn describes his visit to the underworld, a fight with a "man of the underworld," and a boar hunt in which another Fianna youth, Diarmuid, is killed by the boar.

This boar hunt will evoke memories for any student of southern paganism; it was also on such a famous boar hunt that the youthful Odysseus was wounded, Adonis-Attis slain, and young Osiris of Egypt met his end. Contemporary evidence reports that among the Teutonic Heruli, for a boy to prove himself a man he must slay with his bare hands a wild boar or a wolf:

and the Berserker or Ulfhednar were so called because they wore (like Hercules) the skin of the bear or wolf they had slain.

These actual combats with wild animals echo strangely the events of Greek legend, in which Hercules fought the three-headed Cerberus of the underworld in the same manner as Cuchullain of the Celts fought a giant dog as part of his youthful testing; or fought the Nemean lion as today African initiates fight the priest garbed in leopard skin wielding the leopard's claws. Theseus fought the man-bull Minotaur; Eabani of Babylon fought an identical man-bull; and Eabani is described as "hairy," just as Hercules was in his lion-skin or the Berserkers in their wolf and bear pelts.

The wildness of the Berserkers themselves is still enshrined in our language in "going berserk"; hairy and wild, are they perhaps at the origin of German and Celtic folklore tales about hairy "Wild Men," the "Wild Hunt" or "Wild Herd," who live in the woods and lasciviously carry off girls? And, wild, hairy, silvan and carriers-off of girls, may not all of them be avatars of Red Riding Hood's wolf?

The folklore of wolfery is extensive. In classical Greece they said that in the old days at the winter ceremonies at Mount Lycaeus ("wolf-mountain") a child was sacrificed, and anyone who ate of its flesh turned into a wolf for nine years. Pliny's version is that someone was plunged into a lake and emerged as a wolf. Pausanias says a black man in a wolfskin used to demand a beautiful maiden every year until he was killed by Euthymus, victor at the Olympic games.

In these three tales there is a pattern. At the beginning of winter someone turns into a wolf—a change associated with a child; in summer—at the Olympic festival—the hairy wolf-man dies, a change associated with mating and coming of age. (In Teutonic legend too, initiates turn into wolves in winter.)

A person who turns into a wolf and back again is a werewolf—and a belief in werewolves is common to Greeks, Romans, Teutons, Celts, Slavs, Esths, Finns, Lapps, even Jews and some Africans; in India they believe in were-tigers. Whether or not there *are* werewolves, some extremely widespread phenomenon made werewolfery believable: and it is at least possible that

the werewolf, who lives in the woods and is there taught by a magician-Druid-wolfmaster who can turn him into a man again, is a metaphor of the youth in training, while the wolfmaster is his priest-guardian.

Wolf and youth are entwined in myth and language. Werewolves have wolfmasters; Romulus, Remus and Apollo have wolf-nurses; and in Celtic and near eastern myth a werewolf raises and nurtures a baby "king's son." In Slavonic lands when a male child is born it is said, "The she-wolf has given birth to a he-wolf"; the name of the Athenian school, the Lycaeum, means "the place of wolves"; "wolf" is our own slang term for a young man on the prowl.

An analogy: the young training in the woods resemble the wild animals there, who must be tamed before they are fit for domesticity. But if this is so—if young man = wolf, bear, lion, boar—why, at his initiation, is he required to kill one?

Initiation is by its very nature a passage from one state to another, from one self to another: becoming a man, the youth slays or dies to his old self and assumes a new persona. Sir James Frazier of *The Golden Bough* says that Attis is not only slain by a boar, he *is* a boar (471); the German Hofler in his study of old Teutonic age groups remarks that the Berserkers not only fight bears and wolves but "in their strength and ferocity they are themselves wolves and boars." In chart form,

wolf, bear, lion, boar	vs man
is the same as	
youth	becomes man
or old self	becomes new self

And this idiom appears in yet other forms in myth and ritual: youth fights youth instead of wild animal to attain manly status or, in a common legend most familiar to us through Romulus and Remus but widespread in the near and mid-east and early west, there are "twin brothers" and the younger dies or is slain by his twin when the elder achieves manhood.

If, however, this initiation pattern is valid, it ought to cor-

respond to the universal pattern of duality perceived in the first chapter. That is,

wolf, bear, lion, boar	man
youth	man
old self	new self
winter	summer
underworld	this world

And wolf, bear, lion, boar, ought to “belong” not only to youth but to winter and the underworld.

Does the theory test out?

Wolves

Serapis, underworld god of Egypt, had a wolf's head.

Upuaut, underworld god of Egypt, had a wolf's head.

Osiris, underworld god of Egypt, as Khenti-Amenti *is* a wolf.

Lamashtu, underworld goddess of Babylon, had a wolf companion.

Odin, lord of Valhalla, has wolf companions and appears as a wolf.

Morrigan, Celtic underworld goddess, can turn into a wolf.

On Celtic bronzes, an underworld Wolf swallows up the dead; a theme, incidentally, that turns up again in the medieval Harley MS 4751.

Pliny and others show us a child or “person” turning into a wolf at a winter ceremony.

Odin's companions turn into wolves in the winter.

In Marburg, Germany, the man who gave the last stroke at the autumn threshing was baptized “The Wolf” and kept this name till Christmas, when he was led around again as “The Bear.”

Youths in wolf masks appear at festivals in Greece at the beginning of winter, in Switzerland at the New Year's Parade, in Zurich at the spring Carnival.

In the United States we have a day at the beginning of spring, contemporaneous with the church's Candlemas, which we call Groundhog Day, and on which we “believe” that if the ground-

hog comes up from his underground hole and stays up, spring will arrive.

In Lorraine, this day is called "Wolf Day"; elsewhere in France "Bear Day"; if they stay out of woods or caves, spring is here. The Romans perhaps had the same belief, because on Roman and Carthaginian calendars March is represented by a youth in a wolf-skin. Or perhaps the allusion is to the Lupercalia, the "wolf-feast" of mid-February in Rome, where no wolves appeared, but a dog was sacrificed and the bloody knife touched to the forehead of two young Luperci.

The dog, of course, is the wolf's descendant.

Dogs

Persephone and Hekate, Greek underworld goddesses, have dogs; Lamashtu, Babylonian underworld goddess, has a dog as emblem; Ereshkigal, Babylonian queen of the underworld, is part dog, part fish.

Odin, lord of Valhall, has dogs.

Nehalennia, Celtic sea-goddess, has dogs.

In Brittany, a dog accompanies the "Chariot of Death."

The chariot of Vulcan, underworld smith, is drawn by dogs.

Anubis, Egyptian underworld god, has a dog's head.

Odin's Berserker companions are, in Denmark, said to have dogs' heads.

Serapis, Egyptian underworld god, has a dog's head as well as a wolf's (the third head is a lion's).

Hercules fought a three-headed underworld dog.

Yama's underworld realm in India is guarded by dogs.

The Hound of Hell appears in Greek, Norse, Persian, Irish, Eskimo and Hindu myth.

The dead appear as ghostly dogs in England, the United States, Germany, Scotland, Wales and Switzerland, dogs foretell death in France, and the Irish underworld is inhabited by white dogs with red ears.

The dog is sacrificed on February 15 in Rome, and red puppies on April 25 at the Robigalia. The Lydians, too, used to eat dogs at the Feast of Hercules.

Boars and Pigs

In Brittany, the "Chariot of Death" may be pulled by twelve pigs.

The Celtic Moccus, identified by the Romans with Mercury-Hermes of the underworld, was a swine god.

Poseidon, Greek sea-god, is associated with boars.

Mannan, Celtic underworld god, has magic swine which come to life again when killed.

Odin's Valhalla contains a magic swine which comes to life again when killed.

Dietrich von Bern, German legendary woods wild man, goes around with a boar at Christmas.

In Greece, Farnell says, the boar is sacred to the chthonian powers, "chthonian" meaning "underworld."

In Cork on November 1, maskers parade about announcing they are "messengers" of the boar.

Swine, says Sayce, are linked to the underworld and the dead in Babylonian, Greek and Celtic myth.

Odin in youth was injured by a boar; where his blood flowed, spring flowers sprang up.

And the Huntsman, you will remember, gave the Queen the heart of a young boar in place of Snow White's heart.

Bears

The Celtic god "Artaios" or "Bear" was like the swine-god identified with Mercury-Hermes.

In Brittany, a "little lady bear" may pull the Chariot of Death.

The Celtic underworld Persephone of the Berne bronze has bear companions.

Bear-maskers appear at spring festivals in Switzerland and at La Soule and in the Pyrenees in France. Maskers dressed as bears were hunted at Carnival in the Venice of Boccaccio's time, and in the ninth and tenth centuries the church issued edicts against a "bear game" and "bear killing" rituals at the same time of year.

Odin's companions turn into bears as well as wolves in winter.

Lions and Other Cats

Ereshkigal, Sumerian underworld goddess, has lions at her feet.

Nergal, underworld god of Babylon, has the lion as emblem.

Ningursu of Lagash, underworld god, has the lion as emblem.

Lamashtu, underworld goddess of Babylon, is lion-headed.

Sekhmet, underworld goddess of Egypt, is lion or cat-headed.

The Egyptian goddess who ate the souls of the unjust dead was part lion, part hippo, part crocodile.

Serapis, Egyptian underworld god, has a lion head.

On the Cretan Ring of Nestor, there is not only a doglike monster but a lion in the underworld scene.

The lion was not native to Europe, but Viking tombstones bear the lion along with the snake as underworld emblems.

Cats are tossed in the air at the spring Fete-Dieu in Aix and Arles.

In Aix up to 1759 a cat was burned alive in the midsummer bonfire.

Cats were sacrificed at midsummer in Metz until 1750, in Picardy to the 19th century, on the first Sunday of Lent.

In England, it used to be the custom to whip a cat to death at Shrovetide.

In the Egyptian hymn to Aton, lions and serpents are associated with the coming of darkness.

It seems reasonably clear that wolves, dogs, bears, boars and lions "belong," in the curious sense in which a contrast system aligns things, to the underworld. That they "belong" to winter too is not quite so clear, since "wolf-men" turn up at both winter and spring festivals, and we have only a couple of clear allusions linking them with winter.

An example or two, however, will explain what customarily happens to "wolves" and "bears" in spring and how we can be so sure this is the end, not the beginning, of their "season."

In Jumieges in Normandy up to the first half of the nineteenth century a "green wolf" ceremony was held which Frazer says "bore the stamp of a very high antiquity." (528) At this

June 24 festival a Green Wolf, a man dressed in green cloak and tall conical green wizard's hat, ran around a bonfire while his "brothers" tried to seize him and fling him into it. In fact, at the end of the ceremony there was a mock burning of the victim. End of the Green Wolf until the next year, when the same ceremony was repeated with a new victim.

At Arles-sur-Tech in the Pyrenees even today, a very ancient ceremony featuring a Bear is performed on Candlemas, our Groundhog Day.

In this ceremony, a young man disguised as a bear conceals himself in an orchard outside the village. In the afternoon, a group goes out to capture him. The group consists of:

Rosetta, a young man dressed as a girl.

Four young men in double-faced masks like that of Janus, god of winter.

Several young "hunters" with guns.

They cross a stream, the Bear comes out of the woods, tries to capture Rosetta, and is captured by the Hunters, who bring him back to the village square. In the square is a hut, supposed to be the Bear's Cave. The Bear escapes, carries Rosetta into the hut, while the young men in Janus masks guard it—but the Bear emerges, breaks their masks, and spills their sawdust brains. They fall dead; the Hunters "kill" the Bear.

After a moment, however, they pick him up, he comes back to life and is seated on a chair. The Chief Hunter dances about him, shaves off his hair, and "scalps" him with an enormous axe like that of a Woodcutter. Everyone cheers and dances and the wine flows like water.

The death of the Bear, you will note, and that of the Janus youths take place almost simultaneously, at a festival date at which the Celts, long before the Romans or the Christians came, celebrated the end of winter. At the ceremony three events occur: a mating, a hair-cutting, and a death-and-rebirth. *Specifically* each of the three parallels historically attested initiation customs on European soil. And, if the Bear were a Wolf, we would have here a ritual which acts out almost exactly the Red Riding Hood story: woods-wolf pursues Red Girl and is killed by Woodcutter-Hunter.

Just one little problem: why is it *grandmother* who dies and comes to life again?

apple seed
winter
underworld
night
single
priest

old man
witch
bear, boar, dog,
wolf, lion

blossom
spring

peasant

youth
girl

apple (tree)
summer
upperworld
day
married
noble, warrior,
king
adult
adult
adult human

Chapter 3

THE WINTER UNDERWORLD

Once upon a time, a king and queen had a long-awaited daughter named Briar-Rose, and to her christening they invited twelve good fairies to give her their blessing. But as they were doing so the thirteenth, an evil ugly hag who gave children bad fates and who had been left out because they had only twelve golden plates, appeared and said, "On her fifteenth birthday, the princess will prick her finger on a spindle and die!" And all the twelfth fairy could do was to say, "No, she shall not die, but fall into a deep sleep instead."

We all know what happened next: the king had every spindle in the kingdom burned, so on Rose's fifteenth birthday King and Queen in a state of bland confidence went off somewhere leaving her to find, in a remote corner of the castle, a little old lady in grey, spinning. Curious, she pricked her finger on the spindle, fell into a deep sleep behind a hedge of thorns, and stayed there till a prince, fighting his way through the icy prickles, found her and kissed her. And when she came to life the wintry hedge blossomed roses and, as the old tale has it, "inside the castle and out was the life and bloom of the spring."

Nowhere does the tale say the little old lady in grey was the thirteenth fairy or witch in disguise, but of course she was, and she has a long history. Folklore tells of many legendary spinning fairies, often old and ugly: Murna of Waterford in Ireland who lived in a big rock, the French fairies who spun in megalithic tombs of four thousand years ago, and the really remarkable ugly fairy with a spindle attached to her breast who lived in the church steeple of Martin. But old fairies with spindles go even further back than European medieval legend: to Hel, German underworld goddess; to Artemis, Leto and Athena of Greece; the Nereids, Lamia, Neith of Egypt and Lamashtu of Babylon: in fact the "weaving goddesses," as Campbell says in his study of myth, are almost a world-wide phenomenon.

Since its inception, weaving has been a winter task. The wool is sheared in spring, but until the field work is over and long winter nights set in, the housewife has no time to spin or weave it. In many places, too, the teaching of spinning to girls is part of their initiation "in the dark away from the sun," as anthropologist Mircea Eliade says; and in various areas of Europe—in Russia as late as seventy years ago—the girls used to meet the young men at spinning parties for courting and more than courting, even in societies where virginity was much prized. So that the thirteenth fairy, teacher of spinning, was an appropriate person to introduce Rose to the mock death of initiation and the sleep that waked to love.

What else do spinning goddesses do? Well, in the case of the Greek Lamia and the Babylonian Lamashtu, they have rather ambiguous habits: they protect children but eat them too. Leto also is not only mother of Apollo and Artemis but "Kourotrophos"—"rearer of the young," protector of youths below the age of puberty. Artemis also bore the epithet "rearer of the young"; Neith kept a school; Hel is, in more contemporary folklore, guardian of the souls of unbaptized children. As for Athena, she was patron of boys and girls and nurturer of children, and at her fall feast in Athens and Ionia the babies born since the last fall festival were presented to their assembled clans and duly registered as members.

Moreover, Hel is goddess of the underworld, Leto is protector of graves and of the dead, Neith is goddess of the dead and the underworld, and Athena is, in Homer, goddess of death as well as "water-born" like the Nereids. Babylonian Lamashtu, it is thought, is identical to the Sumerian Ereshkigal, goddess of the underworld.

These spindle-ladies are not, of course, the only magical "rearsers of the young" around. Sir Lancelot du Lac was so called because he was brought up under water by the Lady of the Lake, just as the Nereid Thetis brought up the young Dionysos. Then there's old Berhta or Perchta, north German counterpart of Hel, who oversees wild youth and weaving girls, rocks children's cradles, but will also "get them" if they don't watch out. Persephone is nurse of Adonis; Greek Hekate of the under-

world, like Perchta, leads the Wild Herd and is goddess of childbirth purifications; Minerva is patron of boys and of girls to whom she teaches weaving; Morrigan of the Irish underworld in her Arthurian identity as Morgan le Fay trains the young Peredur for his coming of age; Demeter, Isis are nurses of children; not to speak of all the nursing goddesses with child at breast whose unnamed images are scattered far back into the age of stone.

And we have not even mentioned all the animal nurses of children who in legend are exposed at birth or cast adrift: the bear that suckled Zeus and Atlanta, the dog that nursed Cyrus, or the wolf-mother of Romulus and Remus.

If Red Riding Hood's grandmother, then, can be compared to the wicked old spindle fairy, to Lamashtu with her spindle and her wolf companions, to Morrigan who can turn into a wolf, and to Romulus' and Remus' wolf-stepmother, it is understandable that she, she-wolf foster mother, undergoes a death at the same juncture as her he-wolf foster son.

And we can even trace a relationship between grandmother, Red Riding Hood, and Briar Rose. Each of the three narrowly escapes death at the same season; Briar Rose and grandmother "die" and "come to life again." In fact, many of the underworld goddesses we have mentioned—Hel, Hekate-Persephone, Lamia—wear a double visage like the Janus-youths of the Arles-sur-Tech bear ceremony. In one guise, they are ugly old hags, in another, beautiful maidens, and the "Loathly Lady" of medieval romance who becomes young and lovely when her prince kisses her is their historical descendant. The change of season transforms all three, old lady, maiden and wolf: winter hag becomes spring maiden and, almost instantly, summer wife; winter wolf dies and is reborn, like the werewolves, as adult man.

These three characters and one other—the old man-magician-priest-hunter-wolfmaster—make up the cast of spring initiation ritual whether it is enacted in festival, as at Arles-sur-Tech, or in legends like those of Briar Rose and Red Riding Hood.

The old lady of winter and underworld constitutes an in-

stantly recognizable goddess-type deified in the ancient world and, disguised, lingering on into medieval myth and fairytale. She is a goddess of the world of the dead or that watery non-earth the sea; nurse and patron of children and "wild youth" and by analogy of wild animals; teacher not only of everyday skills like weaving but mistress of underworld magic and sorcery; sometimes in deference to her wisdom shown as aged; and who is sometimes specifically (like old age itself) associated with winter.

Her male counterpart is, except for sex, identical: lord of the underworld with priestly or magical powers, water-god appearing in tale as "the old man of the sea" or "an old fisherman." As Nergal, Babylonian "old man" god who became young again under the spring sun, he too can renew his youth as the season changes. Teacher and nurturer of the young like the old lady, he is master of initiation, leader of the Wild Hunt, and in Snow White, Red Riding Hood and the Bear Ceremony, he appears as Chief Hunter. Like the lady, he is shape-shifter, turning into composite animal, merman to her mermaid, forest giant, or cave-dwelling dwarf, like Snow-White's wilderness protectors. Patron of children and wild animals, his name is Atum, Bes, Nabu, Nanna, Thoth, Hermes, Aesculapius, Bragi, Chiron, Cronos, Janus, Manannan, Merlin, Midir, Mimir, Odin, Ea, Enki, Ullr and Nergal; and he has survived as those winter figures Santa Claus, and old Father Time with the baby of the New Year.

Whichever came first, this composite of qualities corresponds to an actual social activity and an archetypal social pattern.

Fosterage, the nursing of the young child by a woman not his mother, is an ancient and almost universal social custom. In Babylon the foster-mother was also priestess-prostitute of the temple; for the Romans, a humble country woman. As late as the eighteenth century Rousseau inveighs against the custom of sending the well-born child to a peasant wet-nurse, and up to a generation ago Caucasian children, particularly if they were of good family, saw their true mother only once and their father not at all until they were grown. "The custom was to place the children in the home of a lower socioeconomic status

than that of the noble household, and in another village," says Sula Benet, anthropologist, in *How to Live to Be 100*. "The foster-households in turn would seek out a family lower than themselves with which to place their own children. The peasants, if they desired to follow the *atalyk* custom, could only give their children to each other." (147)

Faithfully, Caucasian custom continued to follow traditions of child-rearing as ancient as civilisation itself: at six or seven, the boy began to learn skills, manners, the art of war from his foster-father, and significant steps in his growth (the first hair-cutting, the coming of age) were marked by community festivals at which a committee of old people judged the test of skills—horsemanship, use of weapons, knowledge of tradition and ritual—which every youth had to pass before he became an adult. So as late as the twentieth century the Caucasian child experienced the same course of training as the medieval youth who was sent away from home to live with a strange family, taught weaponry and manners by foster-father, Lady and priest at a friendly court—a training sprung from Celtic and German custom centuries older, and which paralleled on a ruder level that of Spartan or Athenian youth, or Babylonian child at the temple school.

Myth, then, recapitulates reality: not exactly—no one, like Lancelot or Dionysos, was actually raised under water—but rare was the youth, until the late middle ages, who could not recognize in Hercules', Theseus', Cuchullain's experiences an echo of his own: raised far from home, taught by Priest and Lady in remote woods and valleys, tested and initiated into adulthood. And the patrons of his early years, kindly in nurturing, terrible in testing, wore lineaments curiously resembling Snow White's, Red Riding Hood's, the Arles Bear's Chief Hunter, Snow White's wicked foster-mother, Briar Rose's old spinning fairy.

These four figures, then, enact a ritual dance together at the verge of spring: maiden-child, child-youth yet unmarried, step-mother-witch, and wizard-teacher. Conceptually, all belong to

the underworld and to winter, yet today the season of intensive child-training. And, belonging to the winter-underworld half of the universe, the four have many other things in common.

Our three maidens, Snow White, Red Riding Hood, and Briar Rose, share several characteristics. They are threatened, pursued and rescued from the jaws of death; all three are young and lovely, and if we bracket Snow White with her 'sister' Rose Red, the names of two of the four are flowers and three have something to do with the color red.

Initiation, spring and flowers come together, intertwined like the flower-wreath worn by June bride or May Queen. Yet the connection is causal as well as temporal: where Attis dies and Odin is wounded, flowers spring up. Not only does spring evoke initiation, but the death of winter-underworld brings the new life of summer. So our marriageable maidens are not only brides but flower-girls, like the ancient love goddesses Ishtar and Kali, carriers of the lotus, or Venus-Aphrodite herself bedecked in roses.

Nubile, open to love, Red Riding Hood wears the red cloak of the Scarlet Woman; and red, in fact, is fashionable wear for underworld goddesses of both the charming and terrifying persuasion: the Celtic Morrigan, the Teutonic goddess of sickness and death, the Cretan goddess of the lions, medieval sorceresses and the Loathly Lady who turns from old to young. It is even the color of the cave Venus of Lausel, whose Persephone Horn of Plenty still bears traces of red paint. Underworld gentlemen, too, prefer red: hence the red hats on Snow White's dwarves, on pixies and water-nixies, on the water-giant of the Sevre and Drome who drags little boys under water, and the Great Hunter of the Brezons Wild Hunt. Yama, king of the Hindu underworld, wears a red robe; so do priest-cardinals and the devil and even that winter foster-father Santa Claus.

Most of the ladies in red are friendly with most or all of our underworld animals—bear, wolf, dog, boar, lion—but so are two others who bear a close relation to Rosetta's Chief Hunter and Snow White's Huntsman: Diana and Artemis, Roman and Greek huntress goddesses who lead the Wild Hunt of underworld youths in training. Nurturer of the young, a goddess as

well as a tall-hatted huntsman-magician may govern this unruly and uncanny pack: witch-Hekate in Greece, Berchta who gives her name to the mob of mischief-making youths who at German Whitsun roam the village after dark terrifying the inhabitants. In literary annals, however, Frau Minne is the most famous wild huntress: patron and goddess of love for the Teutonic troubadours, lovely, long-haired, surrounded by her court of Wild Men, she roves the woods and makes love without benefit of marriage clad, if at all, only in the leafy foliage of her green haunts.

This goddess of greenery claims as ancestor the young Demeter Chloe of Greek spring, "Demeter the Green"; Isis as creator of spring green corn is the "green goddess." But Osiris is also the "Great Green," Horus in the underworld is a green falcon; Yama, Hindu underworld king, wears like Osiris a green face. And, though we do find red caps on young men as sign of their age-class, the commonest image by which we can recognize the Young Man of our underworld quartet Boy, Girl, Witch and Wizard is that of Wild Man or Man in Green. He is the Green Wolf of Jumiege, the Leaf Man of Hildesheim, the Green George May king of Carinthia, the Jack-in-the-Green of English festivals or the Greek Karneion: even Robin Hood in forest green.

But particularly in Celtic territory, he may also appear as the parti-colored Fool. The Irish call the otherworld "the many-colored land" and Morrigan wears not only a red robe but a robe of many colors. So do Druids; and so firmly entrenched was this otherworld-priest color concept that King Eochaid of Ireland made it a law that only kings, queens and the Druid bards from whom the parti-colored fools and troubadours are descended might wear robes of many colors. This idea, however, was not purely Celtic: a fresco of a Mycenaean bard shows him in a parti-colored shirt, and the young Egyptian Horus is described as "feathered in many hues."

The figure of Frau Minne's Wild Man is not unknown in ancient divine iconography either: we have only to think of Hercules in his lion skin, Bacchus in his panther skin, Apollo in his wolfskin, Mamurius of Rome in his furs. Perhaps the

earliest god whose name we know, Ea of Sumer, was fur-bearer too, since his namesake Eabani of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* was such a shaggy fellow: "his hair," says the story, "grew as luxuriantly as corn." The allusion, of course, is to the same stage of the growth cycle which baptizes other young gods green. Eabani, Osiris, the Jack-in-the-Green or May King are what Frazer calls "corn gods," but it is a misleading term: a good many people have asked themselves, very sensibly, if they are corn gods why do they die in spring just when the crops are sprouting? They are corn gods only in the sense they are leaf gods or flower gods, heralds of spring: they die not as corn gods but as initiates.

It is not consonant with their definition as corn gods, either, that so many of them are black, but they are. As far back as you want to go, underworld gods or goddesses, young or old, appear black-skinned or have black appurtenances: even Ea of Sumer has a black tree. Osiris is black or, in a more sophisticated version, "darker skinned than other men"; Anubis is black, Yama is black, Agni youth god of India wears black. Hathor is born a black child; underworld Babd of Ireland, Diana, Hel, Persephone, Aphrodite and Kali of India appear as black as the Hallowe'en witch. The Slavs with their "black god of night and winter," illuminate the idiom and explain to us why the bear of the Pyrenees festival, Pausanias' fellow in a wolfskin who carries off girls, the Wild Herd, the Perchtenlaufen, the Jack-in-the-Green, the Phallophori of Athens and the Kalogheroi of the spring festival in modern Greece blacken their faces like vaudeville minstrel-singers.

Kalogheroi means "rod-carriers"; Phallophori "carriers of the phallus": is there a connection? The Kalogheroi are young rivals in a surviving Thracian spring festival, carrying phallus and bow and fighting over a Bride; the Phallophori were a club of young men who, at Dionysos' spring festival plays, ran around among the audience waving their phallic rods and making a grand commotion. Superficially, a parallel seems unlikely; but if we envision these staff-bearers against the background of all the medieval Companies of Fools who, led by a Prince of Love or underworld Abbot of Misrule, played a

major part in every spring festival and occasionally, like the Fianna or the Berserker, collected ransom from outsiders who wanted to marry one of the young girls of their town or village, a filiation emerges: youth-festival-phallus-wand. These fool companies, costumed in green or many colors and governed by a mock priest, are the descendants of the early pagan Wild Herd. Diodorus says that the secret rituals of the Eleusinia were earlier in Crete rituals of the whole community; in Europe as in Greece when the community initiation rites died out, they were continued by private festival clubs and sacred fraternities.

There is another connection between the Kalogheroi and the Phallophori: the fact that the "rod" the Kalogheros carries is in fact a phallus, and the god Phallus carries a rod which is in fact a club. Some festival Fools carry wands, some budding branches, some phallic bladders, and they all use them for the same purpose—to belabor girls and women at the spring festival to make them fertile. Underworld gods Mercury, Aesculapius, Bacchus, Dionysos, Hermes, Odin, Dagda of Ireland, Eshnun of Sidon, Anubis of Egypt and the Janus-like El of Gabal carry staves too. Aesculapius' wand is rod, club and budding branch simultaneously: Dagda carries a club like Hercules'; the Semitic Amurru, Oedipus in his initiation battle with the Sphinx and Aleyin in his descent to the underworld all carry clubs, while Celtic Smertullus carries either a club or Mercury's caduceus. Dionysos' pine-cone topped thyrsus has a phallic look about it; "wild men," notably phallic and lascivious, carry clubs made of leafy branches; in some medieval illustrations the club is wrinkled horizontally, and shaped to a rounded top explicit enough to offend even a willing maiden's modesty.

In a familiar phrase, what is going on here? Can we take a leaf from Freud, no pun intended, and say that wand, branch, bladder, club and phallus are all phallic symbols? No; the thought structure we are describing is analogical, not agglutinative. The budding branch is an obvious token of spring: when your nine year old comes home with a willow catkin, he is not offering you a phallic symbol. The club was once, perhaps, a budding branch with which one of our ancestors fought an

initiation duel with a sabre-toothed tiger, but he soon found it worked better without branches. Moreover, with the emergence of warfare as a way of life in Europe of the first millenium B.C., the club took on new meaning in the peasant-knight-priest social structure as the weapon of the pedestrian lower classes as opposed to the sword of the mounted knight; and, D.H. Lawrence notwithstanding, peasants are not any sexier than the lords of the manor.

No; what is going on here is an imaginative game which started almost as soon as man had an imagination to play with, in which the raised club of the lion or dragon duel, the sprouting buds, the rising phallus, appeared at the spring festival as independent manifestations of one great upthrusting power—only to be expressed by an intertwining of those things which in their separate ways alluded to it.

Of the four emblems common to gods of the underworld, young and old, the simple staff itself is perhaps the most mysterious emblem. It, and the shepherd's crook, its variant, have been interpreted as symbol of authority—the rod perhaps with which the magician-teacher rules the child; unfortunately for this theory, the children carry it too. The Feast of Fools in Germany is also known as the Feast of the Rod; the "vara" or stick was carried by every Spanish youth of noble birth and gave the word "lad" its name "varon." The young carry rods or canes at spring festivals from Rome to the middle ages, and Santa Claus even gives it to children at Christmas as the candy cane.

The magician's "wishing rod" is a commonplace of Celtic, Teutonic, Icelandic, Swiss, Jewish, Hindu and Chinese myth: essentially it seems to be an emblem of *transformation*: With it Aesculapius brings health to the sick, Dagda the dead to life, and is it not with his magic wand the sorcerer turns children to wolves and back again? Perhaps in the beginning it was just what it is now—a stick—the stick with which some early man or woman scratched the earth and saw an accidental crop come up—at any rate some underworld gods also have spade or plough as emblem and it is as a stick to pierce the earth so crops may rise that English mummers use it.

These emblems, then, consistently mark the gods, young and old, male and female, of winter-underworld: fur and flowers, the colors red, black and green, the staff in all its various forms; and one other—the tall hat of witch, wizard, and young Fool. Mercury, Odin, Freyr, Hermes, Hades, Aesculapius, Osiris, Orcus, Ereshkigal, dwarves, giants, teacher-centaurs, Hal-lowe'en witches and all their underworld goddess ancestors wear a tall hat as token of their underworld nature.

Boy, Girl, old Witch and underworld Wizard; we have met four of the six characters in our drama. Will we know them if we encounter them again? Let's see.

In Haghiios Gheorghios in Thrace at Carnival a Babo, an old woman with a baby in a basket, declares her baby is grown and needs a wife. One of the Kalogheroi in wolf or fox skin, beehive headdress, and phallus-staff, steps forward and claims a Bride. Immediately another Kalogheros, similarly dressed, "shoots" him with ashes, turning him black. The Bride weeps and he comes to life again. In Thessaly one of the two rivals is an Arab with a tail, and a Doctor in tall hat is required to revive the victim. Death and rebirth enacted, spring ploughing may begin.

At ploughing time in England, St. George, the famous dragon fighter, duels with an opponent known as the Fool or Turkish Knight. The dragon, if he appears at all, does so only as a Hobby Horse in a tall witch's hat, but the Turkish Knight is sometimes explicitly termed St. George himself in other guise. The slain Fool or Black Knight is brought back to life by a Doctor; the other characters, dressed in leaf or furlike costume with tall hats, include a Mother or Father who mourn the victim and who may variously be called Mother Christmas, Father Christmas, or the King of Egypt (whose daughter St. George married); in some versions there is also an old woman with a baby.

The dead youth and the maiden whom he marries after his transformation into adult male, are easy to identify, but if you spotted the old lady with the baby in the basket as Snow White's stepmother and Adonis' foster-mother Persephone, you have an excellent grasp of the pattern. And what of the Doctor whose

magic, like Dagda's, brings the dead back to life, old Father Christmas of winter or the old King of Egypt with his blackened face? Name, function or age identify them clearly as denizens of the winter-underworld whose priest god guides the youth into the ways of manhood, and through initiation death and life inducts him into maturity. Above all his tall hat, like the Turkish knight's turban, the Fool's fools-cap, marks him unmistakably.

And so to Robin Hood, whose pointed caplet is as much a part of him as his green jerkin, and who lives in the woods with a troop of other young men dressed in green and one, Will Scarlett, dressed in red and carrying a rose blossom. What becomes of Robin? He fights a giant (Little John) with staves at a stream crossing and defeats him, just as Hercules defeated the lion or Theseus the minotaur. But then he in turn, at an archery contest such as was often held on May Day in old England when Robin paraded with the mummers, is defeated by an Abbot who is also, disguised, King Richard.

In Babylon each spring the king, after playing the role of spring god Marduk and defeating a dragon like St. George, was struck in the face by the priests and deprived of his kingship; later he was restored to his throne and wed the "goddess of the land" in sacred marriage.

So Robin, losing his kingship of the winter wood, is buffeted by priest-abbot, then restored to power as king's officer and wed to Maid Marian. Curiously entwined, though different in detail, our story remains the same: wild animal, dragon, black-faced youth or underworld giant are met and defeated in combat; there is a death, a resurrection at the hands of a priest figure, and a marriage. But who is St. George, and above all, who is Robin's eternal enemy the Sheriff of Nottingham?

apple seed
winter
underworld, water
night
single
priest

old man
witch
hunter
bear, boar, dog, wolf, lion, dragon,
composite animal, dwarf, giant,
spindle, wand, staff, club
red, green, black

apple blossom
spring

peasant

youth
maiden
wild hunt

apple (tree)
summer
upperworld
day
married
noble, warrior,
king
adult
adult

adult human

Chapter 4

A ROYAL SUMMER

Of one single myth all our old western myths, tales and legends are variants, from Snow White and Robin Hood to *Oedipus Rex*. Snow White and Robin undergo woods training, a mock death and rebirth, achieve marriage and civil responsibility. But this is only the first act of the drama; there is more, as *Oedipus Rex* attests.

Once upon a time, says an old Coptic account echoed by medieval tale and ancient near eastern myth, a king of Tarsus, drunk and in grief over the deaths of both his parents, violated his sister, who became pregnant. Learning what had happened, he surrendered the throne and became a Monk.

The child, when it was born, was set adrift in its cradle with a tablet of silver for its upbringing, one of gold for its coming of age, and one of ivory telling the story of its birth. A Fisherman drew baby John to shore, and with the help of an Abbot, raised him.

Coming of age, John became a knight, defeated a King who was besieging his native city and, marrying the Queen his mother, became King himself. However, after several years of marriage the ivory tablet, inevitably, came to light and their relationship was discovered.

The King fled to the seashore, changed clothes with a Fisherman, had himself chained and the key thrown into the sea, and was transported to an island where (in perhaps excessive observance of the "no meat" rule) he ate nothing but grass. In the meantime, however, the Pope died and the commission sent to choose a new one stopped by the Fisherman's home, where they were served a fish in whose belly lay the Hermit's key. Taking this as divine guidance, they sailed to the island and consecrated John Patriarch: his mother, too, hearing of his sanctity, came to him to cure her blindness and learning who he really was, joined him in the religious state.

At first glance this tale seems to have little to do with Snow White, though it has obvious parallels with the life of Oedipus, cast out, received by a member of the lower classes, marrying his mother and, in discovery of his incest, blinding himself and going into exile as a kind of scapegoat heirophant. Observe, however, that Snow White, Oedipus and Pope John were all abandoned, raised far from home by underworld figures, and married into royalty. And this story of the outcast child and triumphant return is told of Eabani, Horus, Perseus, Dionysos, Krishna, Cinderella: it is in fact the first stage of human life and the god cycle, fosterage and training away from home and initiation into adulthood.

Does every Perseus then marry his mother, every Cinderella a Brother Prince? No—the incest factor about which Oedipus and John were so self-conscious is in earlier tales and near eastern royal houses taken for granted. God and goddess, divine hero and heroine, are of course offspring of the same Sacred Principle—indeed they *are* that Sacred Principle—so they are sister-wife-mother, brother-husband-father, all rolled into one. Whether maiden and hero are related before marriage or only after depends merely on the tale variant you are hearing.

So hero and girl marry and become king and queen of country or household: what happens then? Nothing—until the end of the marriage; they simply sit there, married, governing, and dispensing justice. The youth's function is to learn and test his mettle through initiation: the adult's is to administer, vote and fight. And here it is significant that Patriarch John, like every other hero of legend, receives at coming of age the tokens of his new powers, weapons and crown. Curious coincidence, that battle axe, sword and circlet are also the emblems of the *gods* of war, justice and government!

St. George, in his battle with the Turkish "dragon," wears a war-axe at his belt; so does Thor in his battle with the Midgard Serpent. Thor, second member of the Scandinavian god trio youth Freyr, man Thor, and Odin ruler of the otherworld, is also god of marriage and sometimes of war: his hammer—really the descendant of man's first weapon, the stone axe—consecrates marriages, sanctifies civil contracts and farm boundaries; and

its descendant the judge's gavel symbolizes the administration of justice. The face of Thor used to be carved upon the high seat where throned the master of the Norse household, the Lord of the Land, and when the Thing met, the great council of men and warriors, it assembled under Thor's patronage.

For the Romans Thor was Jupiter, protector of oaths, contracts and marriages, divine Lord of the City-State; and for the Greeks Jupiter was Zeus, the married man, patron of the family, guardian of contracts and boundaries, ruler of the tribe and Lord of the land. Zeus is god of the Double Axe, Jupiter carries the flint: all three are gods of thunder and lightning.

That the stone axe, thunder and lightning, are always linked is curious but it is a fact: even today in France when a peasant ploughing finds a stone axe or a polished celt he will call it a thunder-stone, or say it is made by lightning. The primitive connection lies in the flint, the tinderstone which when struck creates sparks: so the axe-god, hurling his axe or smiting, shoots forth lightning. Through lightning and thunder the axe-god gets his reputation as rainmaker, waterer of crops; but his true connection with agriculture comes by another route. St. George clears the way for ploughing, Sumerian war god and dragon-fighter Ninurta is the "spring sun," Thor fights the frost giants of winter and is, like serpent-strangler Cernunnos of Gaul, "goodman of wheat." These are gods whose season is summer and the time of ripening crops.

From India to Egypt and Scandinavia the thundergod is universal. Syrian Nesheph, Hebrew Yaw, Phoenician Mot, the Semitic Adad who replaced axe-bearing Enlil of Sumer, Baal of Lebanon, Set of Egypt, Perun of the Slavs, all rule the lightning and most carry the war-axe. Taranis of Gaul survives only in images, but his name is a variant of Thor's and an epithet of thunderbolt Indra, national god of India; and like Thor, he is shown fighting a dragon-giant.

The slaying of dragons and the administration of government constitute, in fact, this summer god's twin professions. Enlil of Sumer, Ninurta, Marduk, Set in early Egypt, Apollo, Zeus and Thor defeat their Zu-serpents, Python, Apophis or Midgard snake and, triumphant, immediately turn their attention to

the ordering of land or city. And, whenever kings are in fashion, kings are identified with them. The king of Sumer is "the little Enlil"; Marduk, Indra, *are* the king; Set is "The Majesty of Egypt." A one-ness of king and god that takes us into the realm of *The Golden Bough* and the divinity of kingship, be it the King of the Land or the King of the May—but before we approach the Divine Right of Kings, let's see what else these gods of administrative thunder have in common.

Bulls, stags, rams and goats immediately come to mind. Bull Set, bull Jupiter-Zeus, bull Adad, ox Enlil, bull Mont, war-god of Thebes; bull Re, bull Min, bull-thunderbolt god of the Kassites, bull Baal—all share their bullhood as well as their other qualities. Indeed in some old Sumerian images it is the bull instead of Ninurta who slays the Zu-dragon and in the Valais they have a legendary bull who kills dragons too.

Thor rides the goat-cart, and the original of the Pharaoh's false beard which symbolised his royalty was a goat-beard. Zeus with ram's head Aegis and clad in ram's fleece; the male god of Catal Huyuk appearing with bull's or ram's head: all these are brothers of Baal of Carthage, a man in the prime of life with ram's horns. Stag and grain are emblems of Gallic Cernunnos as well as of a megalithic European male god of four millenia ago; Resheph wears the gazelle's horns on his head, the antelope is Set's animal, and the Queen of Ur once wore a necklace of tiny stags, bulls and goats as token of her royalty.

What do these animals have in common? Well, for one thing, all have two horns; and second, all are large domesticated animals (the stag was herded in Europe in the days of the cave man and the reindeer still is in Lapland). The domesticated animal goes with the domesticated man, perhaps; and, though it may seem redundant to underline their two-hornedness, these dual horns obviously had special significance to the gods concerned. Cernunnos, Set, Resheph, Enlil, Baal, Mont, all wear them as part of their "crown"; the daughter of Ramses II and Nefertiti wore horns on their crowns as symbol of royalty; the High King of Ireland was known as the "King of Horns," Alexander the Great as the "Man of Two Horns," and the

horned helmet on the warrior of the Gundestrop cauldron survives in the two-horned warrior helmet of later Scandinavia.

Are there one- and three-horned animals or gods, then? Yes, curiously enough, there are, and in sufficient number to indicate we may be dealing with a number system in which "one" stands for youth-underworld, "two" for mature man and his civic territory, "three" for priest-underworld; and that it may be expressed by feathers and heads as well as horns.

None of the underworld animals discussed in Chapter 2 are horned; but initiation hero tales show us youths (Dietrich of the Wild Herd, Osiris, Cuchullain) with a single horn-like protuberance on their foreheads. Ereshkigal of the underworld and Marduk's dragon Tiamat have one horn in the middle of their brows; Osiris wears one green feather. The unicorn is so useful a symbol that since it did not exist it had to be invented; and how about that single feather in Robin Hood's hat? Three-hornedness, three-headedness, three feathers occur too: there was a three-horned god at La Tene, a god with three heads among the Slavs, Gaul had a three-headed god, the Etruscan underworld dog had three heads. Zeus' old enemy the serpent Tryphon was three-headed; and the triple tiara belongs to the Cretan underworld goddess as well as to the Pope.

What other marks identify a god of city and summer? Thor, according to the experts, is characterized by his "girdle of strength" or blue band about his waist; the ring of stars or light about his head; the cross-form in his swastika symbol or the shape of his axe-amulet; and the crosses and circles on his war-hammer. All of these emblems fit his fellow-thunderers and, in saintly iconography, Saint George.

The crown seems a natural attribute for a royal god—but it is in fact so old an emblem of kingship that the king of Sumer and the Pharaoh of Egypt could not have been recognized without their diadems. Zeus, Jupiter, appear crowned with a wreath, like the victor King of the Olympic Games or the "lord of the garland" in Ireland who ruled the May festival as did Robin's King Richard; consuls and emperors of Rome went crowned and wreathed like Jupiter.

Queens claimed crowns too: Inanna, queen goddess of Sumer, had to lay aside her "crown of the plain," and her necklace, when she descended to the underworld. And the women who portrayed the Lady of the Land at the sacred marriage which (as in Babylon) united the High King of Ireland to his country wore the same crown Briar Rose and Snow White assumed when they wedded their royal husbands. In fact crowns everywhere seem to belong to marriage as well as to royalty. Roman bride and groom, like brides today, came to the altar crowned with wreaths, Greek brides and grooms wore crowns long before Byzantium; and the appearance of the crown coincided like the wedding itself with spring—even today all over France and central Europe, Corpus Christi is the "Day of Wreaths," wreaths hung on flagpoles, worn on girls' heads, boys' wrists.

What other symbols come with weddings? rings, garters, and, at least in Rome, the girdle: there the groom ceremonially gave "Juno's girdle" to the bride. But Thor wore a girdle too, and so did the megalithic stone age god who carried the axe; Hercules' son at coming of age inherited his girdle, Cretan youths assumed the girdle when they assumed manhood, and initiates of the Cabeiri at Samothrace received a purple girdle. Sashes were given as prizes to young male victors at medieval May games, along with rings and garters; St. George or his lady capture and chain the dragon with a girdle; and George is patron of the knightly Order of the Garter, the English counterpart of the Burgundian Order of the Golden Fleece, which was a neckchain. In fact we seem to be going around in circles of circles.

The circlet is one of the most distinctive emblems of the mature god or king and his partner, whether it is the "solar disk" of Mont, Min's bull and the Pharaoh; the "whirling disk," swastika or wheel, which belongs to Thor and Taranis; the necklace worn by Inanna, Cernunnos, Gallic chiefs, Cretan nobles and the medieval lord of the castle; the rings worn by German chiefs and the anklets preferred by Egyptian dignitaries; or the girdle and ring assumed by the Prince of Wales at his investiture in Caernaervon Castle. And to make assurance doubly certain, the circle appears again and again with

the double axe in cross-in-circle pattern, as on Crete and in Scandinavia; with swastika crossing as in Mycenae and Viking Europe; while swastikas and circles are made of bull figures or bull's horns in Iberia, Scandinavia and Crete.

The city itself, emblem at once of civic ruled and civic ruler, is thought of as a cross-in-circle. Darabjird of Parthia, Firuzabad of Persia, the Baghdad of Mansur, Babylon, Harun al-Rashid's Hiragla, the Danish Viking forts of Trelleborg and Aggersborg, even the Roman plan of Chichester show forth the ideal city as a circle with two streets, north-south and east-west, crossing in the center where, of course, king or lord dwells in his palace. And of Babylon they tell the tale that the throne room, like the earth itself, revolved, and had a starry painted ceiling.

Why? why should throne rooms, the circling swastika, the spoked wheel, stand for civic order, that order which Marduk, Ninurta, Apollo established upon earth after defeating the Dragon of chaos? What, in the chain of the Lord Mayor of London, declares so unmistakably his authority?

Egyptologist Frankfort, in *Kingship and the Gods*, says (3) "The ancients experienced human life as part of a widely-spreading network of connections" between community and cosmos, "and it was precisely the king's function to maintain the harmony of that integration." And this linking function extends downward to every active adult: king on throne, knight on horse, judge on bench, master of the farm on his haywain, husband ruling his household from the high seat. The essence of the circle is that it bounds and, bounding, binds: as Marduk or St. George bind the dragon, so the initiate girds himself for his new dignity and curbs his wildness. When man and maid exchange rings they bind themselves exclusively to one another and take on the power and chain of the household. Donning crown, ring or armlet, the chief-king subjugates himself in sacred marriage to the "four quarters of the land"—the cross-in-circle—and pledges himself as center of the cross to maintain communications north, south, east and west; to prosper crops by the power of summer sun and thunderous rain which he commands; to defend with his life the walled circles of farm-

stead, fort, village, city and domain. Thor's girdle gives him the power to set boundaries, but it also binds him, as St. George is bound by knightly oath, girdle, garter and cross, as the Lord Mayor and the Sheriff of Nottingham are bound by their chains of office, to the maintenance of civic order.

Not forever, though, can chaos be kept at bay. King for some years the Coptic John, like Oedipus, unearths a fatal flaw in his nature—a gap in the O of his order that short-circuits the power of his kingship. Originally that flaw was not incest, which if anything enhanced the divinity of the king: the crisis was, in one idiom, the end of summer; in another, the coming of old age.

"Kings killed when their Strength fails—what catastrophes may not be expected from the gradual enfeeblement of his powers and their final extinction in death?"—so Frazer in the *Golden Bough*. (1945 ed. p. 265) Kings being kings and chiefs chiefs, however, ways to circumvent the death of rulers on approaching old age were invented. The Persians retired their king at age 52 and the Ramayana takes it for granted that kings will abdicate and become sages in old age. The king's death in Babylon was only a symbolic one, and the Pharaoh of Egypt was not slain, though he was required to prove his strength by repeating his accession race every so many years: and he raced wearing, of all things, a tail—indeed the festival was called the Tail Festival.

In Ireland and a number of other countries they used to change kings at the end of every seven or nine years; but even as late as the beginning of the middle ages in Sweden, the Swedes killed their king Domaldi following seven years of famine. Charged as he was with responsibility for rain, sun and crop growth, bad growing weather was one of the clearest signs that the king's energy needed renewing in the person of a younger man; which explains perhaps the intense interest the Pharaoh took in Jew Joseph's dream of the seven fat years and the seven lean, and his lavish gratitude for advice on how to manage the famine.

It is in the old tales, however, that the Death of the King

appears in its unvarnished form. In Egypt they tell how Ra, when he grew old, was bitten by a snake and died; in Greece how Zeus had his axe wrested from him by serpent Typhon; among the Hittites how the Weather God's heart and eyes were plucked out by the dragon; in Scandinavia how in the end Thor was swallowed by the Midgard serpent. Even Gilgamesh, king alter ego of wild Eabani, when he achieved the elixir of eternal life had a snake steal it from him.

Who is this snake underneath the grass? none other than our old friend the winter-spring dragon coming into his own again: scarcely an underworld god or goddess, from Aesculapius to Wadzet, who does not have the snake as emblem. "The great python devours the ass," says the Egyptian Book of the Dead, the ass being in Gaul, Rome and Sumer, emblem of royal supremacy; winter has come, and it is time for all summer things to die back into the underworld.

Often, in the process, losing their heads. St. George, in Greek "Saint Husbandman," is hanged, torn on his own wheel-symbol and finally decapitated on his November 3 death day. And he is only one of a whole class of saints, all warriors and national patrons, who appear like Anne Boleyn "with their heads tucked underneath their arm." At harvest time in Greece, at the festival of the city-god Zeus, they beheaded a sacred ox—the god himself. Tammuz, Mot of Syria, were harvested and ground fine like the grain they stood for. In fall the scythe beheads the wheat; the axe falls on ram and bull, whose seed is already spent and who are too expensive to feed during the winter.

So the king, his grain, his animal and his season die together.

Fantastic? No—not even the supposition that *all* heads, even heads of lettuce, were thought to be lopped with the king's. Set was said to be a great eater of lettuces, the Goat Summer King of Puck Fair in Ireland was throned on a heap of cabbages, and we have our own king's head grinning down at us still at Hal-low'e'en—that pumpkinhead whose name of Jack O'Lantern echoes the divine names of Dionysos, Zeus, Iacchos of Greece and the John of our Coptic story himself.

So when you cry "Heads or tails!" you are spinning a choice between summer king, chief (head), head of state and head of

grain; and the youth of winter, the youths of spring Taily-Day festival in Scotland, the Pharaoh with his tail running a race to win back his royal state, and all the youths and fools of festival with their tail-phalluses.

Coptic John, however, was not executed. No. At this juncture, as at the spring transition, our world-pattern allows two cross-ways. The spring initiate may die as dragon-black man or conquering, become in his new state, lord of his universe. Just so, in the fall, Lord, king, man, hero or god, may "die the death," as Cuchullain, Krishna, Tammuz do; or he may simply change his state to god of the underworld or his human representative on earth, the priest.

So Zeus defeated by Typhon becomes Zeus Meilichios, Zeus of the Underworld; and John changes his earth for sea, his crown for the triple tiara of the Papacy, and his sword for the key which in the priest's hands unlocks the doors between the worlds and facilitates all rites of passage. So, when Bran of Ireland and Harold the Saxon died, their sacred heads were set upon walls or buried in them to protect their countries from invaders; but also, in the Dark Ages, if you wanted to dispose of a king, you might shave his head in a ritual like that of initiation hair-cutting and send him to a monastery.

When John was tonsured his mother-wife-nun had, like Oedipus, "trouble with her eyes." A trivial point, but it is surprising how often "one-eyed" or "blind" goes with underworldness. Odin is one-eyed or a one-eyed man turns up in the Wild Hunt; trolls, cyclops, giants, have one eye (or one leg, like the legendary Irish Fomorians; Perseus' three old sorceresses who alternately hinder or aid in his initiation quest have only one eye among them; and Mabd of Ireland is said to have turned the children of Calatin into sorcerers by cutting off the right foot of the boys and blinding the left eye of the girls.

Simultaneously with her eye trouble, John's mother became a nun—and again the idea that underworld god or goddess is chaste, or even castrate, has wide currency. Demeter is said to appear in three forms: girl, married woman, and underworld widow; Athena and Aesculapius are chaste, Eshmun as healer

and Osiris as god of the underworld are castrate; the priests of Attis did, in fact, castrate themselves. And though in many countries priests married, the concept of celibacy as natural to the priesthood carried over into Christianity, as did the black robe for this underworld figure.

The cycle of life which John's story shows is, of course, only partly actualized once tribal life is superseded by city or state. Heirs succeed to the throne in childhood (though they have regents until they come of age); and when they are old, if they have kept their heads, they keep their heads, though they may have to keep a Court Fool to represent the other half of the year and world.

The astonishing thing is not that ancient customs changed, but that the primitive thought pattern concerning "the three ages of man" was so long preserved—is lively still in language and political custom. Seniors, graduating from high school, still ask "Why do they call it 'Commencement' when it's the end?" and some older person replies, "Because it's the beginning of a new life." The American head of state is still, for all practical purposes, superseded in November, at the beginning of winter and the time of cattle-killing, and up to the last generation the traditional time on the farm for slaughtering and hanging cattle was Election Day.

Like the Sumerian government, the American government provides for two houses of legislature, a congress of mature men and a House of Elders or Senators like the Roman council of Old Men; and in many western countries it is still the rule that you have to be older to run for the Senate than for the (Men's) House. In the Episcopal church a reliable member of long standing is called an elder; in the Presbyterian, he is a presbyter, Greek for priest. Our Mayors are still assisted by aldermen (elder men); and in the Middle Ages it was not unheard of for husband and wife, their family raised, to separate and enter monastery and convent respectively.

Some of the Middle Ages' favorite stories, in fact, duplicate closely the tale of Coptic John. The tale of St. Eustace, for

instance, begins near the end of John's, at the point where he crosses water to become a Fisherman-Hermit; and carries the cycle through another generation.

Eustace, knight and warrior, was said to have been out hunting when he came upon a miraculous stag with a cross between its horns; awed, he abandoned sword and lance and became a Hermit. Slightly Christianized, this rite of passage from warrior to priest in fall, the season of stag-hunting, echoes the myth of Tammuz the king, transformed into a stag, slain and descending to the underworld; or of Krishna the King in India, killed in the course of a gazelle hunt; or of Llew Llaw Gyffes lord of Wales, slain while standing on the back of a stag. Eustace's stag-hunt evokes the ritual stag hunt of autumn in which the Kings of France, from Charlemagne to Louis-Napoleon, had to lead the court; and this in turn is reverse mirror to the Irish fall ritual in which the king of Ulster was forbidden to attend the bull-sacrifice on pain of death. In their individual ways, stag-hunt and bull-sacrifice both draw a parallel between fall, death of the summer animal and death of the king.

At the same time Eustace retires to a hermitage, his wife and two small sons, who are sailing home in a ship, are attacked by pirates, one-eyed men of the sea. The wife is carried off, the boys escape to shore and are seized by a Lion and Wolf respectively who deposit them in the care of a peasant.

So simultaneously all four enter their winter-underworlds: world of Lion, Wolf, priesthood and the sea. Family is separated, the children are in training with foster parents, Eustace is chaste and religious, his captive wife presumably chaste too—though with pirates you never know, and the hagiology does not explore this question.

Abruptly, however, everything changes. Eustace, rather like the groundhog, emerges from his hermitage to become a warrior again and miraculously stumbles upon his wife and two boys, now grown men. All three, Eustace and his sons, take up arms together, but after a disastrous battle they are captured and boiled in a pot—a brazen pot, in fact, shaped like a bull. Stag hunt to bull-boil, the saint and his family have experienced the full cycle of fall death and separation, winter train-

ing, spring battle and coming of age for the boys, ending with fall death again for all three mature men. The literal improbability of the story is only matched by its symbolic exactitude.

Ending up in a pot is, today, the prerogative of missionaries; but it is a pervasive fate in preliterate myth and worship too. In one of the oldest poems in the world, the "Cannibal Hymn" of King Unis of predynastic Egypt, the king celebrates his greatness in the next world by eating men and even gods cooked in kettles. In Grimm's *Findevogel*, the cook plots to boil the foundling baby in a kettle; Ea of Sumer gives the Cauldron of the Gods to the priests; Orion, or so they say in Egypt, is a hunter who cooks gods and eats them.

Lamashtu, eater of children, has a wine vat as emblem; the Cimmri used to slit their prisoners' throats over a vat and drink blood mixed with wine or beer. That early Irish tale, the *Hostel of the Red Innkeeper*, tells of an inn where bodies get boiled in cauldrons; in St. Nicholas' best known Christmas tale, three little boys are cut up by an innkeeper and pickled in a vat. St. Eustace is baked in a brazen bull, the witch tries to bake Hansel and Gretel in an oven; Saints Felix, Crispin, Regula, Crispinian and Cecilia were boiled in oil, all of them at some time between October and December.

The Skallerup cauldron of the Bronze Age in Scandinavia had the cremated remains of a man in it. The Greeks told one another tales of young Pelops boiled for Zeus' supper, Medea cooking her children, and Farnell seems to think some such thing actually happened in the worship of Moloch at Carthage. The Gauls drowned sacrificial victims in cauldrons and, hammered in bronze on the Celtic Gundestrop cauldron, found in a bog in Denmark, is a processional scene headed by a priest in long pointed cap who drops a small figure into a cauldron.

In such circumstances, it does not seem unduly flippant to inquire what's cooking.

apple seed
winter
underworld,
 water
night
single, castrate
priest
old man
witch
hunter
bear, boar, dog, wolf, lion, dragon,
composite animal, dwarf, giant
spindle, wand, staff, club, basket
tall hat
eye trouble
tail
red, green, black
three

apple blossom
spring

peasant
youth
maiden
wild hunt

one

apple (tree)
summer
upperworld
day
married
noble, warrior,
 king
adult
adult

adult human, goat,
bull, stag, ram
Axe, circle, wheel,
swastika, cross,
girdle, garter
head

two

Chapter 5

SOME PERILOUS PASSAGES

Once upon a time, in the Town of Hamelin, there was a plague of rats and a Pied Piper (note the triple feather in his hat and his colorful garb) offered to carry them off for a price. The mayor and town council agreed, but when the Piper had piped the rats out to sea, they were too stingy to pay him. So he lifted his pipe and all the children followed him as he danced out of town and disappeared, into a cave, in one version, or the deep woods in another, leaving behind only one little lame boy who had not been able to keep up with the rest. Whereupon, doubtless, the townspeople fell upon the mayor and tore him to pieces or, at the very least, yanked off his gold chain of office.

Yes indeed, you say, an interesting story. The rats in holes or at sea belong to the underworld, and their multicolored master is obviously a lord of the underworld, lord of rats as Apollo was at Tenedos; the children too disappear through a hole in the ground. So (if there is any truth at all to what you are saying) the tale must relate to that "carrying off of children" to the woods-underworld for training so often mentioned earlier. Nevertheless it seems to us that this story is very unlike John's, who as a baby went to sea in a basket; and what has the little lame boy—or the mayor—got to do with it?

True, John's baby voyage and the children descending into the cave are two different metaphors for the same life experience, and other tales give us one of the two accounts but not both. Cuchullain, like the Pied Piper's charges, left home at six to join the boys' training class; Jason was already able to walk when his father took him to Chiron's cave to join Hercules, Pelion, and a dozen other boy Greek heroes in their studies. Perseus, however, sets to sea in a chest and Lug's seaborne cradle was a boat. So the difference is not one of racial tradition.

Rather, the experience of initiation into life can be viewed as starting when the child leaves the family for fosterage and

wetnurse, or at a later stage, when he begins his studies under the priest. Both stages, however, are somehow felt to represent a moment of passage, as is evident from the "risk of death" imagery associated with them; and ceremonies marked both moments. Druids baptized the young child, in India there was a formal "leaving for school" ceremony; at the fall Apaturia the Athenians brought children born since the last festivity to be inspected and enrolled in the tribe.

The "crossing of water" is in itself an unvarying mark of a transition in life and appears in tale and ceremony as part of the ritual for childhood, coming of age, or coming of old age. Jason on his way to Chiron's crosses a river; Dionysos in the opening of the *Bacchae* lingers, reflecting on his childhood, at the brink of the stream he must re-cross to win his kingdom; the Bear at Arles, if you want to refer back to Chapter 2, crosses a stream on his way from woods to initiation. Each time John changes his state—baby prince to fosterling to knight to Pope—he crosses water; and when Caesar crossed the Rubicon, the sacred reinforced the political aptness of the phrase to give it a currency of two thousand years.

Not only myths but literally thousands of ceremonies enshrine this water imagery of transition. Marduk's image and Osiris' travelled by water to their festivals; medieval maids washed their faces in dew or jumped into the river on St. John's Day; new apprentices were plunged into the fountain at the spring "Butcher's Jump" at Nuremberg; the Fool sprinkled the bystanders with water. The statue of the goddess of the feast—Bhavani in India, Cybele in Rome, Rhea, Berecynthia, Artemis, Hera in Greece, Kupala of the Slavs and the Teutonic Nertha—received a ceremonial bath before the festivities.

In the modern world the taking of a bath simply suggests that the bather is dirty; this was obviously not the case with the ancient gods. But we bathe too before important ceremonies: on Saturday night to be clean for church on Sunday, on the evening or morning of our wedding; we bathe the dead too for burial and the child for christening as the medieval knight bathed before receiving knighthood. The seasonal festivals like christening, marriage, knighthood, death suggest transition,

and the bath or water-voyage washes away an old state and purifies for a new one.

But passage and purification—"washing away my sins," "crossing the bar," "passing over Jordan"—do not exhaust the implications of water crossing. A structure that divides the world into two halves inevitably evolves a third category—the category of one *and* two, the all, and that of "neither-nor." Crossing water, you are neither on land or in sea—you are in a nowhere. The tale of Osiris' birth tells how the older gods forbade the birth of the child on any day of the year, so his mother gave birth to him in the "intercalary days," the days invented to make the official Egyptian calendar correspond with the sun—a mystic time which corresponds to "no time."

As there is magic time that is "no time" so there is magic place that corresponds to "no place." Robin, fighting with Little John, met him on a bridge over a stream; all the great events of Irish myth, says Rees, take place at fords and the edge of the sea between land and water. Jason died on a ship tied to a mast; Llew Llaw Gyffes could only be killed standing on a stag in the midst of a stream, and dozens of ancient riddles play with the contradictory state of being nowhere, neither in this world or the underworld, on land or in sea. An old medieval tale, for instance, tells how Pope Gerbert became a magician by hanging upside down from a bridge. Festival time is also nowhere time and incorporates nowhere place: some of the Eleusinian ceremonies took place on a bridge, and just a couple of years ago some country fellow in Lisle, New York hung the Hallowe'en hanged man in Pope Gerbert's old place: under the bridge over the Tioughnioga.

So myth baby or child crosses water on his way to fosterage or training; or, in a third variant, is exposed and adopted like Oedipus or Krishna by a passing shepherd, fisherman or priest. Metaphors, all three: the basket cast adrift, the carrying off, or the abandonment and adoption by an underworld figure. Metaphor, but not *only* metaphor. Children, weeping, really did leave home for training, and though the shepherd found Oedipus, no one but the wolves found other abandoned babies. Exposure was common practice among the Greeks and Teutons;

the father at birth could accept the child or reject it, and deformity was almost always cause for rejection—the little lame boy would never have made it to the training class.

As for putting to sea in boat or cask, setting a baby adrift in a barrel was a standard Teutonic method of exposure and was also practised till the middle ages in part of France, where every seven years a baby in a barrel was offered up to the sea in return for an abatement of winter storms.

Curious connections between myth and life; and though it is a subject everyone would much prefer not to discuss at all, almost every "myth death" at initiation has a historically attested counterpart in real life. Greek tale tells how Lityerses would cut off the heads of strangers in the harvest field; a century ago at harvest in Mecklenburg the mowers threatened the farmer, the lord of the land, with a traditional mock death under their scythes. And at Patrae human victims crowned with wheat stalks were sacrificed to Artemis, while standing in the river.

The Massacre of the Innocents which haunts every Christian child turns up much earlier in the myth of the Indian Krishna—and the Irish Dinnsenchas tells us at the November Samhain feast "one third of the children of Ireland" were sacrificed. The Dinnsenchas, probably, is indulging in symbolic exaggeration—the children constituted one third of the three age-classes—but St. Patrick preached against the "burning of the first-born" at the Taillten festival; and what about that tiny figure being dropped into a pot on the Gundeströp cauldron? The body of the Neolithic three year old buried under Pelops' mound at the Olympic site, and that of the child buried under a sacred stone at Stonehenge, did not get there by accident. Children were sacrificed to Moloch in Biblical times, and at a temple site on Crete the heads of many infants were found attached to severed neck vertebrae. Tacitus, Jordanus, Caesar, Cicero and Strabo, sophisticated Romans all, describe to us the offering up of human beings in the Celtic and Germanic worlds by hanging on trees, decapitation, burning in cages, drowning in cauldrons—prisoners and captives for the

most part, but as late as the Dark Ages in Friesland a member of the community itself.

The last recorded human sacrifice in Europe took place in Scandinavia in the eleventh century *after* the birth of Christ.

An initiatory system is a symbolic system. Summer equals mature man equals grain; winter equals seed grain equals child. Obviously, however, you cannot murder a whole age class to ensure the passage of the season; if you do, there will soon be neither priest nor initiate to create a ceremony. The bull dies for the man, the pig for the child—but the gods are not to be cheated, and it was not always so. At least one initiate often gave up life in token of the symbolic death of the others. And long after custom had mitigated human sacrifice, the idea that sacrifice was essential to the normal progression of the seasons, the prosperity of crops and the fertility of mankind, did not die out. "The lamb's head is offered for the man's head," says an old Sumerian hymn, but in a real crisis, the old ways are safer. After a famine of seven years, the Swedes stopped sacrificing the Yuletide bull and hanged King Domaldi instead.

Human sacrifice is, of course, very shocking to us; almost as shocking as our profitless sacrifice of fifty thousand lives a year on the highway would be to the Celts. To understand it, we must make an effort of the imagination. Sacrifice, says cultural anthropologist Jane Harrison, is a bridge built; that same mysterious bridge which hangs over "no time" and "no place." Communication must be established with the gods of the universe, the gods who are themselves season and age-class. The past must die so the future can be reborn, summer follow winter, men come of age, children enter tribe and school-class. What better way to ensure it than naming one man a god, the essence of godhead for the nonce in him, slaying him as spring, summer or winter god, and sending him to tell his namesake above, "The act is done, spring is slain to make way for summer, youth for man—now it is for you to obey the meaning of the act, endow youth with manhood and send good crops and summer"?

So the god-messengers fly upward year after year, first human, then frog, ram or bull, finally cereal cakes in the shape of horns or bones or children, lamb-cakes or mince-pies such

as still in the middle ages were ceremonially eaten at Easter, summer fair or harvest festival—such as we still eat at Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Eat them? Yes; because you may send your divine sacrifice to the gods, but how can you participate in the sacrifice and the divinity unless you, too, partake of it? Almost every sacrifice of the “harvest bull” recorded—in Greece, Egypt, Ireland, Sumer, anywhere—also records the sharing of the flesh among the people; and the bull *was* Min, *was* the Pharaoh, *was* Zeus; its emblems, its association with the god, proclaimed it. When in Ireland the King of Ulster was forbidden to attend the fall feasting on the Black Bull on pain of death, it was because he was the Bull and the bull the King; if he appeared the gods might demand the older sacrifice for the newer.

Blood would do as well as flesh. The Egyptians said Sekhmet of the underworld used to kill men and drink their blood at the beginning of winter, till Ra introduced her to pomegranate juice mixed with beer and she unsuspectingly came to prefer it. Hence all the wine cups which pass at festivals from Athens to our own day, the scarlet beverage of sacrifice and communion. The Teutons and Scandinavians with their cauldrons of blood on the altar and their blood bowls were more direct: the Scythians drank from the skulls of their slain enemies and the Egyptians drank the blood of a traitor’s sons before their battle with Cambyzes.

So our ancestors were in fact cannibals, though from the very best of motives; and if Egypt’s Cannibal Hymn is very early and Osiris and Hercules are said to have weaned the Egyptians and the Irish respectively from the practice, Pliny said the Druids not only sacrificed men “but prescribed the flesh to be eaten as most wholesome meat”; the *Bacchae* and the *Omphagia* commemorate the same ritual in Greece; and Charlemagne’s ninth century laws for the Saxons prescribe death for “any who according to heathen custom burnt men as wizards or ate men.”

An embarrassing and long-lasting custom, then, this sacrificial cannibalism; and we insist upon it only because the many

and marvellous meanings attached to those ever-recurring symbols of cup and cauldron make no sense without it.

Our museums are littered with the salvage of temple kitchenware—cups and kettles of silver, bronze, gold, plain or hammered, carved, inlaid with ritual scenes like the Vapheio cup, the Gallehus Goldhorn, the Gundestrop cauldron. In this artistic display we must not forget that, though some may have been kept in the treasury, the temple actually used its cups for drinking and its cauldrons for cooking. Cup or cauldron, then, is naturally the symbol of priest god or goddess: the “kettle” carved on stones bearing the emblems of the metalithic goddess in four thousand years ago France, Athena’s cup, Dagda’s, Ea’s, Odin’s cauldrons.

And, as Grimm points out, who says “witch” says “cook,” in Greece as in Germany. Jason’s Medea-witch cooks a ram in a cauldron and brings forth from it a live lamb, then urges Pelias’ daughters to restore the youth of their old father in the same way—but tells them only half the spell, so Pelias stays cooked in the cauldron. An appropriate trick for the cauldron of an initiatory festival which changes youth to man and “old man” back to youth again; Dagda, Odin, Bran’s cauldrons can even bring the dead to life. Cups sometimes exercise the same magic powers—the cup or drink which conveys immortality haunts European, Hindu, Semitic and even Chinese myth. So all those bowls buried with the dead, the pots, jars, cauldrons in which their ashes and bones are interred, and the carving fifty-five hundred years old which shows us a dead man of Ur raising a bowl to his lips tell the same story: cup and cauldron can resurrect the dying.

They can bring life, too, to the living. Dagda’s cauldron, or Odin’s, pour forth an abundance of food and drink, like the Greek cornucopia which was originally, let us not forget, a drinking horn: fruits spring from it as from the earth when the seasonal festival and its sacrifice have been properly carried out.

Macbeth’s witches bubbling away upon their blasted heath are cooking eye of newt and toe of frog rather than the baby most medieval witches, like the Greek Orchomenai, are sup-

posed to consume regularly; but they are carrying out a cauldron ritual just as ancient as sacrifice—that of divination. The priestess of the Cimmri slit prisoners' throats over a cauldron and drew omens from the swirls the blood made in the water. We do the same thing in a sketchy way when we bob for apples at Hallowe'en or draw prizes from a bran-tub. No time, in fact, could be better than the "no time" of festival for peering into the future, and if the future remains obscure, "bubble bubble toil and trouble" is always a safe prediction.

Some cauldrons contain "treasure," image of agricultural or spiritual prosperity. Some bestow poetic skill, an attribute proper to a priest god. Cups and cauldrons contain not only wine but water, creating rivers, fountains, seas, a melding of the asset of abundance with the underworld god's mastery of water. Some cups, moreover, are in the form of ships—Isis' cup in Apuleius, the Grail when swimming in blood it comes toward Peredur: so cup, cauldron, ship, Perseus' chest and John's basket are all "vessels," symbols of transition.

Youth, crossing a stream, washed in tub or fountain, cooked in a cauldron, makes its transition to maturity in spring, the mature man "dies" in fall; when is the child's moment of passage? Browning's date for the Pied Piper's visit notwithstanding, the testimony all speaks for fall or midwinter. It was at the fall Apaturia that the Athenians registered their latest born, at Samhain that the Dinnsenchas reports child sacrifice, at the Greek harvest festival that the baby Dionysos was celebrated in his winnowing basket, at once human seed and seed grain from the threshing which would bring the ripe grain next summer. Still to the last century in German harvest fields the mock birth of a baby was enacted in the shadow of the last sheaf: the seasonal and human year begins when the seed of the last is winter-sown for the next harvest, or when the sun, declining since June, starts its December 25 progress back to the longest day of the year. All the gods whose birthday we know celebrate it then, as mayor or summer king die or abandon office; and the Baby of the New Year starts his journey hand in hand with mayor-become-Pied Piper, old Father Time.

Today as yesterday, these seasonal and age-class rites of passage are celebrated with appropriate participants: spring is the young people's festival, winter the festival of children. Christmas with its gifts to children (gift-giving is indissolubly linked to rites of passage); its candy canes, its wassail cup; its mince pie which always used to be baked in the shape of a cradle; its white-bearded patron in the red suit whose name is a variant of Odin's nickname, who is priest, patron of sailors, sea and winter—Christmas still preserves intact the pattern of the old winter transition. In Switzerland for that matter to this day Santa makes his Christmas visit accompanied by a Schmutzli, a sinister black imp who "if the children are not good" will carry them off to the underworld with him. St. Nicholas and the Schmutzli—benevolent and terrifying face of the same figure—are merely variants of the Lamashtu of four millenia ago, witch protector and eater of children; and it is no accident that St. Nicholas' most popular Christmas legend concerns those three little boys cut up and boiled in a pot by Santa's alter ego, the Wicked Innkeeper.

More vividly still, Hallowe'en evokes the old Celtic Samhain of which it is in date the direct descendant. The Hallowe'en party as it used to be celebrated, with its dark passage through scary noises, strange apparitions, and the feel of mock slimy "innards," can profitably be compared with contemporary primitive initiations elsewhere. The apple-bobbing, casting of apple-peels, evoke ancient festival divinations. The witch, like the witch Medea to whose temple children were dedicated in fall at Corinth, stands in for Lamashtu, and ghost or one-eyed pirate of the underworld for Santa. Meanwhile on the porch flickers the grinning pumpkin-head, the Jack of sacrifice, while on roadside tree or under the bridge at Lisle there sways, stuffed with straw and often pumpkin-headed, the Hanged Man, the exiled king of summer.

apple seed
 winter
 underworld, water
 night
 single, castrate
 priest
 old man
 witch
 hunter

apple blossom
 spring

 peasant
 youth
 maiden
 wild hunt

apple (tree)
 summer
 upperworld
 day
 married
 noble, warrior,
 king
 adult
 adult

bear, boar, dog, wolf, lion, dragon,
 composite animal, dwarf, giant

adult human, goat,
 bull, stag, ram

spindle, wand, staff, club, basket
 tall hat

axe, circle, wheel,
 swastika, cross
 girdle, garter

tail
 eye trouble
 red, green, black
 three

one

head

two

Initiation of youth
 sacred marriage
 death of youth

initiation
 of child
 death of man

Chapter 6

FESTIVAL

What is festival? sacred time and sacred place: but is sacred time really so ill-defined that a fall festival can be celebrated anywhere from Hallowe'en to Christmas, or even on September 8, St. Michael's, or Labor Day?

Oh yes; the earliest calendar *was* festival. "Oats sowing" or "bean harvest" are still, in some primitive parts of the world, the only calendar there is; and men count moons, not weeks or months, between them. Sumer had no weeks; the year revolved about the Nisan when Marduk fought the dragon, and the harvest festival which celebrated the death of Tammuz and the coming of the god of the underworld. Egyptian astrologers marked a year which periodically got out of phase with the sun, and had to tack days on to it; but the populace counted events according to whether they fell before, during, or after the festivals: these, thanks to the Nile-governed upside-down agricultural year, were the fall sowing celebration of the death of Osiris as initiate and underworld god, and the spring harvest sacrifice of Min-Pharaoh-bull. In Greece, where the climate varied considerably from south to north, harvest was celebrated in August at Athens and at Locris in December.

The Celts' festival calendar quartered the year around the first of February, May, August and November. The Romans, that tidy people, tried to fix imperial festivals on the solar quarters of March 25, June 25, September and December 25, but, particularly in the tradition-oriented countryside, never completely succeeded. The Church attempted (and curious it is to watch it doing so) to straddle dates for all and sundry, imposing Candlemas on the Celtic end-of-winter and the Roman Robigalia, Easter on the Jewish Passover, All Saints' and All Souls' on Samhain, and Christmas on Mithras' birthday. So medieval Europe feasted the coming of spring, for in-

stance—and still does—from March to Corpus Christi or mid-summer.

Sacred place shows no such volatility. —Yggdrasil, the Teutons said, was a great World Tree whose branches stretched to heaven, sheltering eagle, hawk and deer, and whose roots plunged deep, at its foot serpents and the swans of the “Urdarwell.” Upperworld and underworld with their appropriate animals, this was Yggdrasil; but, with its god’s council house nearby, Yggdrasil also presents the image of any great festival site of Europe. Not one but what was composed of tree or standing stone as “world’s navel,” piercing the sky above and the earth below; a well or spring leading to the underworld; and a great hall for feasting, negotiations and the passing of judgment. Only the cave or burial mound is lacking at Yggdrasil; for these three—tree or stone, well, and mound—compose the sacred place which is “no place” and “everyplace” at once, the place where the three worlds meet. Uppsala, Stonehenge, Tara, Mount Olympus, Athena’s sanctuary on the Parthenon, the Sumerian temple with ziggurat and sacred sea, the Egyptian temple with obelisk, grove and sacred lake, all enshrine exactly the same concept.

A tree is a standing stone is a ladder, interpenetrator, vertical bridge which, piercing the boundaries into underworld and world above, opens passage. Jack climbs the beanstalk to his otherworld adventures, Santa Claus and fairies come down the chimney, St. Simeon Stylites sits on a pillar to talk to God. And, whether you hang rags on the tree like the gypsies and the Irish, or sacrificial victims like the Scandinavians, your offering is already halfway to the world above.

It is easier to climb trees, however, than to crawl down the roots, so if you want to be certain of contacting the underworld, you had better dig a well. A legend of Chartres cathedral tells how, when a choir boy fell down the well of the crypt, a White Lady at its foot entertained him for a year and brought him back unharmed. This is the same Lady, of course, who reared Lancelot at the bottom of a lake, and many are the fairies, mermaids, sirens and other descendants of the old underworld goddess or god who, like Celtic Manannan, lived at the bottom

of a spring in a magic world of marvellous delights and treasures.

The treasures, archaeologists have discovered, are actually there too: if you hang offerings to the gods above, to the gods below you fling them down a well, exactly as we do today when "for luck" we toss a coin in the fountain. So critical, in fact, was the offering to the underworld that if spring or well did not exist it had to be created artificially. Mycenae dug shafts, Egypt dammed lakes, and arid Sumer adorned its temple courtyards with great bronze basins which, like that Solomon made to adorn his temple, were called "the sea."

The Pied Piper's cave is of course an alternate route to the underworld, a descendant of the sacred Neanderthal "bear cave," of Altamira and Lascaux, of the twenty-thousand-year-old cave of Lausel where the paleolithic Venus sat holding her single horn-cup-cornucopia. Caves, however, are scarcer in nature than trees or springs, so artificial caves come quickly and in wide variety. The megalithic dolmen (a rock table, heaped with earth); the kurgan, the long barrow, the ziggurat-mountain with its "cave" where Marduk lay buried; the dark low sanctuary at the heart of the Egyptian temple or the dark chamber where the Pharaoh lay buried at the heart of the pyramid mountain—all these are artificial caves, haunted in Greece by the Venus of Lausel's descendants Persephone and the Eumenides; in Ireland by Morrigan and Buanna; in Germany by Holda or Hel.

But why bury Marduk, the Pharaoh, Hippolytus, Pelops, Beowulf in a cave? Jacquetta Hawkes puts her finger on it when she talks of mound-burial as "the return to the Mother for rebirth," illuminating abruptly why our ancestors painted deer, bull, buffalo on the walls of their fertile caves. The cave is the womb, and if imaged animals are painted there, will they not multiply on the face of the earth? As for animals, so for men—and national legend still tells how Charlemagne, Ogier, Dom Pedro, Barbarossa, are not dead, but sleep somewhere in their caves, beards twined about them, till a moment of great peril calls them forth again to save their people.

What the cave can do, the well can do also. Of the cave of

Pertuis-Fourtiers the French say that if you put a white goose in one end it will come out black the other; the same sea-change works for the Dame Blanche who, every hundred years, bathes in the fountain at Ste. Baume to emerge young and beautiful again. It was at a fountain Gilgamesh planned to bathe himself into eternal life, except that the snake ran off with his immortality; Ponce de Leon was still searching for that Fountain of Youth in seventeenth century Florida. In the same belief the Greeks flocked to the baths at the Temple of Aesculapius, the Middle Ages travelled to holy wells in search of health, strength, an easy delivery or curly hair, and we ourselves, despite our sophistication, make the pilgrimage to Baden-Baden or Lourdes for healing.

Even a tree or standing stone can offer passage to a new life: girls still slide down menhirs in Brittany for fertility in marriage, the tombstone holds open the way for the dead to rise again, and the Middle Ages passed children through cleft trees and holed stones to cure rickets, backwardness or a hare lip. A new life can cure anything: the pain in the back, sterility, death itself: it is only a question of making one's way to and through the Place of Passage.

Coming to Stonehenge, you see at first only the circle of standing stones rising slowly over the hill's lip; closer to, the stone of the central altar becomes visible, the mounds of burial aligned to the west and, alongside them, the track so broadly and solidly made that even now the eye can follow it down to the River Avon. Water, cave and upright: so when, in Athens, you ascend the Acropolis you are not astonished to see in the sacred precinct the ruins of Athena's olive tree, her well, and the burial mound of Cecrops. Olympus had sacred stone and altar, the mound of Pelops, the spring and the cave of the Mother; all perhaps once boasted too, like Tara or Uppsala, the sacred grove whose tall trees made such murmurings one could imagine the gods spoke. Carnac to Ste. Baume to Memphis, every sacred site expressed the same language; here the gods rose and descended and, at certain times, man might catch them on the wing, accompany, or capture a moment's hearing.

Where are they now? Well, if you are seeking passage, seek

any European village crossroads where the earth is thinner, worn down by centuries of passing feet; where a fountain offers splashing water under a soaring center shaft still perhaps cast in the shape of tree or Maypole; where across the square the church-mountain hatches immortality from the cave in its crypt.

And if you are lucky, you may catch festival going on there too.

A glance at page 27 of the Michelin Green Guide to Spain, "Principal Folklore and Religious Festivals," shows us:

March 12-19 in Valencia, the "fallas" or burning of giant and often satirical effigies in a fire;

Holy Week in Cartagena, Cuenca, Valladolid, Murcia, Sevilla and Zamora, a procession escorting holy figures on floats, followed in Sevilla by a great fair, in Murcia by the ceremony of the Burial of the Sardine;

April 22-24 at Alcoy, the St. George festival with massed mock battle between Moors and Christians;

April's last Sunday at Andujar, the pilgrimage of the brotherhoods to the Virgin of the Head;

at Jerez, late April or early May, the Horse Fair with racing, in Cordoba dancing competitions in flamenco;

in Madrid on May 15, the St. Isidore festival with bullfights;

at Valencia, in May, the bringing in of the "Christ of the Boat" from the sea, with fireworks;

at Whitsun, El Rocio, the gypsy pilgrimage to the Virgin of the Dew with racing, parading and drinking;

at Corpus Christi, festivals at Camunas, Sitges, La Orotava, Toledo and Burgos where giants parade, civic officials lead the procession and boys dance the jota;

St. John's Day, the Alicante festival with parade of giants and fireworks and bonfires;

July, the famous bull-running in Pamplona, and in Valencia, bullfights and battles of flowers.

Fall adds the Basque festivals with "sporting contests of all descriptions," wine festival at Jerez with more flamenco, the "Dia de la Raza" with more processions, and the festival of Our Lady of the Pillar at Saragossa.

Superficially, each of these festivals seems very different, but looked at down through the crystal of history, they appear instantly as scattered survivals of what was once one great and coherent festival ritual. The "beating of the bounds"—which was carried out three thousand years ago at Buto in Egypt—was common to Rome, Greece, Russia, Norway, Ireland and England. The death of the underworld giant, of the undersea sardine, is the metaphorical equivalent of the slaying of the otherworld dragon at the Nisan. Bull-running and bull-fighting as festival performance can be traced back four thousand years in Crete and India. The Holy Week procession in Sevilla today or Valencia's arrival of Christ in the boat would seem perfectly familiar to any Babylonian who had seen Marduk arrive by water from the akitu-temple or the great Nisan procession of the gods upon their litters. And the program of events at the Nisan (procession, dragon-fight, race, bonfires, open air combat between two opposing factions, crossing of water, mock sacrifice, sacred marriage, communal meal, and divination or taking of omens for the coming year) could have been duplicated in Lincolnshire as late as the last century.

The shape of festival is the shape of a bridge. Two contrasts meet, but they must not touch, even by a hair's breadth, or we will have snow in August, immaturity and rashness in the seasoned citizen. Gingerly we span the tightrope between them, balancing upon symbols of the old and the new.

The processional itself is a tightrope: when we approach the gods it is well to smoothe the strands of our tangled wills into orderly obedience so that it is of one mind and spirit we finally penetrate the gates, the door to their sacred enclosure where a wall of sticks, earth, mud brick or marble marks off the profane from sacred territory. And, hearing our long coming, the gods too awake to hear our pleas, our praise.

So of one mind, we proceed to demolish the old, create the new; the old fire is put out lest it contaminate the hearth of the new season, and the new fire is lit. The "lighting of the new fire" (and, as the Druids and Germans had it, by a "pure hand") sanctifies each household and also, perhaps, "encourages" the sun of summer and of the midwinter solstice; but sometimes

the old fire is fed before it is extinguished and sacrifices standing for the old season are consumed in it. At midsummer in France, you will remember, cats were burned in cages, in Normandy the effigy of "Shrove Tuesday" was burned at the beginning of Lent, and our bonfire is originally "bone-fire," the fire which disintegrates the sacrifice of time past and clears the way for the future.

Water also is our ally: bathing ourselves clean of the old, crossing barefoot at the ford, we travel from what was to what shall be without carrying the dust of one into the other. And, taking a leaf from human life, we may in mock battle "defeat" the past, destroy it, and ensure the triumph of the season to come.

Battle as transition is most vividly portrayed by the spring "Battle of Summer and Winter" at May Day on the Isle of Man when Winter, in wool and furs, and the Queen of flowery May are led out, while their attendants battle to the clash of tong and cleaver for Winter and violin and flute for May. But the priests' battle at Paprehmis in Egypt, the "battles between the followers of Set and the followers of Osiris," or in India, Kamsa and Krishna; the Nisan combat, the Moor vs. Christian struggle at Alcoy and many parts of southern France: all these carry the same meaning: old god, old season, old age class, "the black" or "the white" giving way to the rightful successor in a ceremony enacting, paralleling and reinforcing a desired change of state . . . Did you know that one of the oldest poems in the world is the Sumerian "Battle of Summer and Winter"?

The battle of "Moors and Christians" which in its single combat form pits winter Moor against summer St. George takes place at many spring festivals in southern France as well as in Spain; and it is intimately related to that mock mass combat or intertwined maneuver on horseback the Middle Ages referred to as "the Troy game"—a game the men of the *Aeneid* also performed at their spring festival of rejoicing when they arrived first in Italy. Its name of "Troy game" takes us down intriguing byways of speculation (especially as early English historians claimed the British were descended from fleeing Trojans), but its linguistic clues, like that "clew" of yarn by

which Ariadne guided Theseus out of the labyrinth, take us into yet wider and more curious fields. For "Troy" or "truia" is a name given also to centers of standing stones, old sacred places, and to mazes.

"Troy," then, is a description not only of massed festival battle but of winding dance-like and maze-like maneuvers, and of labyrinths intimately associated with sacred places not only on Crete, but in Greece, Italy, Egypt, Etruria and pagan Ireland. Farther back in time, labyrinth signs and routes in the sacred caves of our remote ancestors cause scholars to speculate that passage from one cave area to the next, in darkness, may have made part of initiation ritual; even today, in parts of Africa, the penetration of the novice through a maze-like hedge of thorn bushes to the sacred center is one part of initiation testing.

"Troy," "truia," says linguist Calvert Watkins, is perhaps a form of the old Indo-European verb root meaning "to turn," in the sense in which we still use it in the "turn of the year." Passage, turning, going through doorways are all part of the same concept implied in the Greek term for the festival song, the dithyramb, the double door. Are we perhaps here touching upon the original meaning of the term "Druid" as priest, "Druda" for May goddess of love—not "oak-man" or "beloved" but enchanters who possess the clue to the winding ways of passage?

Our own baseball or football, "spring" and "fall" games (the former honored by a ceremony in which the president throws out the first ball), descend from those festival ball games once played all over Europe as part of the transitional struggle. Up to the last century in Normandy, Brittany, England, fierce scrimmages still took place whose aim was to get the ball "over the line," a water or land boundary. In Ireland the game was hurley, ancestor of baseball and field hockey, played with a club and originally invented by the great god Lug: indeed a hurley match preceded the May 1 ritual battle of Mag-Tured when the bright heroes of the goddess Danu defeated the underworld Firbolgs. Sometimes the ball represented the sun, as at Ludlow where it was a bright red sphere tugged across a

river, or in Brittany where the game's name, "soule," meant "sun." But man and nature alike participate in transition, and at Hoxey the ball was once a bull's head, and in Chester they say it was originally the head of a captured Dane.

Wrestling, racing, gymnastic contests at festival are as old as the Nisan footrace and the Egyptian boxing match between "Set" and "Horus" at Senusert. In Greece in their time the Olympics were often overshadowed by the Delian and Pythian games, the Karneion at Sparta, the Panathenea at Athens or Cronus feast at Thebes: sacred site, sacred purpose were alike in all, and marked a rite of passage. The Taillten games in Ireland, with an unbroken history of more than two thousand years; the Basque sports; the Highland games; all share a festival origin, and the concept that victory in sports aids triumph in a cosmic combat. For, say Klindt-Jensen and Wilson about ancient Scandinavia, "in early times the ground plan for almost any game may represent a cosmic pattern," (Viking Art, 137) and what men do on earth prompts or reinforces the gods' acts in heaven.

Not all festival games are muscular, however. All the lively arts are offspring of festival. Musical contests shared the stage with athletics at Taillten and the Nisan, the Panathenea, the Theonoxia, the Hyakinthia, the feasts of Hermione and Thebes. Music and poetry went hand in hand: poets competed at the Taillten, the Nisan featured a lover's serenade, the Babylonian poem of the battle of summer and winter was act first and only later poetry; at the Panathenea they recited Homer, accompanying "Troy game" by "Troy song."

Our own poetic origins are tautly thonged to festival: the "May song" of Spanish, English, French, Teutonic celebrations, the satire of Arles, Evreux and Pilsen which echoes the "satire at the bridge" of the Eleusinia, the "lament" over the death of the Turkish knight in the St. George play, reappear almost simultaneously all over early medieval Europe in courtly poetry as the love song, spring song, satire, tenson or "contest," and mourning plaint of the wandering troubadours. And the fact is that until the Renaissance no other type of poetry exists but that which has sprung from the acts of festival.

Drama, too, has a festival parent. "Ludus" in Latin may mean, indiscriminately, a wrestling match, a festival, or staged drama. When the Spaniards of Murcia "bury the sardine" to celebrate the end of winter, the Normans burn their Shrovetide Jack, the English parade a Jack-o-Lent in red and white herring skin, this is not yet drama; but the Mamuralia in Rome, in which the fur-clad Mamurius with his old lady wife is driven from the city with sticks comes closer to it; and the Bear Play at Arles-sur-Tech and the St. George play are at all points dramatic. When, stock characterized as Young Man, Old Man, Old Woman, Bridegroom and Young Girl, the festival players emerge from the massed chorus debating their personal conflict rather than the conflict of Summer and Winter, drama begins exactly as Aristotle says it does.

And, amid so much identical transitional magic, it is the dramatic element which clearly distinguishes spring festival from fall. The script of the spring involves the conflict of young hero with wild animal, underworld monster, brother youth or occasionally old man; and his consequent accession to marriage and-or throne. That of the fall enshrines the Death of the King and-or the birth of a child. The spring play's pilgrimage from festival to stage is easy to follow: the "giant fight" initiation combat memorialized by Spain's, England's, Greece's processional giants is echoed in *Seven Before Thebes*, the Pamplona bull-running appears in Euripides' *Bacchae*, and St. George versus the dragon is the theme of one of Germany's earliest written medieval plays.

The script of the fall festival survives only in myth, and in rare "birth" or "killing" rituals on the harvest field; as soon as possible, the king substituted animal sacrifice for his own, and the "Death of the King" was swallowed up in the joy of communal feasting, just as it is now at Christmas and Thanksgiving. Curiously, however, it emerges unmistakably in drama, already in the Greece of Aeschylus and Euripides partly independent of festival, and free of the political inhibition imposed on any acting out of a "Death of the King" ceremony. The *Bacchae*, the *Peace*, the *Oresteia*, and many other Greek dramas follow the spring script with remarkable fidelity, in-

cluding conflict, sacrifice, sacred marriage, sharing of food with the audience and burial mounds just on or off stage. The *Thesmophoriazusae*, the *Knights*, the *Acharnians* and *Oedipus Rex* do the same for the fall: in two there is a mock sacrifice of a baby, in one an old man is boiled in a pot to restore his youth; and Oedipus himself, blinded, dethroned, widowed, and surrounded by young children and a chorus of Old Men, is a perfect image of the transition from summer's powerful maturity to the winter season of old man and child.

Procession, purifications by fire or water, contest—in race, duel, game, song or drama—and the sacrifice of a victim emblematic of the old season: these are unvarying features of festival from prehistoric times to the last century, "acting out" simultaneously change of age class, change of season so that the pattern of things below may correspond with the pattern of things divine and the universe circle in harmonic consonance. Yet the reality of festival—the sound, scent, vigor and activity of it—embodies an immense variety of sensations so lively as to obscure, sometimes, its fundamental unity.

The cry of the dramatic agon, the music of harp and lyre, the shouts of young wrestlers and racers as they enact transition and also—as at the Irish *Taillten*—show off their physical and poetic skills in "graduation exercises"—these are the sounds of festival, but louder perhaps than these is the sound of munching. The ritual aspect of the festival meal we have touched upon, but not its underlying passion—the immense joy of eating. "Festival" itself means "farewell to fasting": winter ends and there is food again, birds' eggs, birds, rabbits, boar and deer emerging from winter concealment; pancakes are made of the last of the flour because the empty stomach sees berries and onions and game coming to feed it.

In the fall the lust for food is, if anything, more desperate, for when shall man eat well again? and this is the time for meat, when the excess cattle are slaughtered—sausages, black puddings, roast beef, roast mutton, roast pig and cider drinking. Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we go on short rations . . . The freezer, the supermarket, changed life more than the automobile, closed our eyes to the link between season and

survival bred in the bones of our ancestors; but, more than anything else, the cry of hunger seeking satisfaction charges the intensity of festival worship.

And there is plenty of food at festival: not just the official fall beef or spring pancake—but giant squash, piglets, apples, groceries to take home with you. In an economic pattern as universal as it is natural, the peasant brings his surplus crops to festival, where all the buyers are, to market them. Jack of the Beanstalk's initiation encounter with a giant started, you may remember, after he had taken his mother's cow to market and sold it for three magic beans. At Puck Fair they throned the Goat King on a heap of cabbages, and the Theonoxia had a vegetable show with a prize for the largest leek. "Fair" and "festival" are inseparable.

Craftsmen of all kinds, cobblers and weavers and those blacksmiths whose black faces and uncanny skills identified them with the underworld god, flocked to the fair too. Special talents and special needs met at the community ingathering; but festival was appropriate for the exercise of legal and warlike functions also. For, when the two seasons changed to four, and it was thought appropriate to feast at each, the early spring became a festival of end-of-winter, May and November kept their sacred age-class functions, but the midsummer fair was often transformed into a great national festival, as at the Taillten at Carman, or the Olympic Games. Here came the King himself, and all his lords and warriors, for seasonal conference: spring was the time for the muster of armies which the Franks termed the Marchfield and autumn for laying down of arms and planning for the next season. At these same great festivals, for the same reasons, law cases were heard too important to leave to the local judiciary and noble marriages, such as needed the king's sanction, were arranged. The "court," the sacred space delineating kingship, was not only a "royal court" but a law court and a place for courting as well.

So, at one of the great festivals of the north of Europe, we find the tinker with his fire, the booth of the milkwoman with the cheeses, the fat cook making meat-stuffed pasties to be held in the hand; beyond, a calf is bawling and a boy chases an

escaping pig through everybody's legs. Dotted crookedly around the fair are shacks of brushwood thrown up as temporary fair shelter (after all, even if it doesn't rain, you want a place for lovemaking). Swirling about the sacred center are wrestling matches and a footrace; in a nearby dell where stands a hollow stone, two merchants shake hands through the hole to seal a contract for their next year's dealings. A young couple, with their parents, wait blushing to plight their engagement in the same way and enjoy the freedom of one another's bodies. . . .

Closer in, the king sits crowned on a rude throne against the burial mounds, before or behind him the Pole or Stone of Judgment where cases will be heard shortly. Beside him bends his tall-hatted Druid or priestly advisor in robes of many colors and beside him sits his Queen, his partner in the sacred marriage.

Central to the scene, focus of all its activities, is the sacred well and altar: the well at which the priests make offering while people stand in row with their pottery bowls to drink of the holy water when they are finished; the altar near which simmers the cauldron rich in meaty sacrificial smell.

Shaké the kaleidoscope, and we are at the Olympic games: mound, cave, well, temple and sacrifice are the same. Here the kings and archons meet in the season of truce so long as the games last, to settle thorny questions and negotiate peace and war; here singers touch lyre and flute, the merchants bargain while the populace throngs, eating cakes and sipping wine. And, exactly as at Taillten, wrestlers grapple and youths of fleet foot vie for the wreath of laurel which will crown one of them sacred king, King of the May and King of Summer, whose name will live forever inscribed on an altar as one who is divine.

Shake again, and the cycle of Roman spring festivals unroll before us: the Mamuralia, at which old fur-clad Winter is driven from the city, the Mars feast celebrating the departure of the army balanced by that in October on its safe return; the Liberalia when young men come of age and don the toga; the Floralia, where youths race round the arena. In the arena Caesar sits, crowned with the laurel wreath of the Olympic victor,

while gladiators play out before him the spring conflict of youth against youth, youth against wild animal.

Shake again—it is the Easter court of Eleanor of Aquitaine: the populace feasts, pays its penny to juggler or pìeman, while Eleanor bends her head to confer with her tall-hatted bishop in approval of a projected noble marriage, the solution to a thorny lawsuit, the choice of peace or war for the coming summer. At her feet sits her Fool making satiric jests and behind her, singing, is her troubadour. Both are in coats of many colors: is she not Queen, divine Lady of the Land, deserving of serenade and lovesong, tribute paid for centuries to the Lady of Springtime? complexified, urbanized, Christianized, the national festival still enshrines the old rituals of coming of age, coming of a new season.

apple seed
winter
underworld, water
night
single, castrate
priest

apple blossom
spring

peasant

old man
witch
hunter

youth
maiden
wild hunt

bear, board, dog, wolf, lion, dragon,
composite animal, dwarf, giant

spindle, wand, staff, club, basket
tall hat

tail
eye trouble
red, green, black
three

one

Initiation of youth
sacred marriage
death of youth

Apple (tree)
summer
upperworld
day
married
noble, warrior,
king
adult
adult

adult human, goat,
bull, stag, ram

axe, circle, wheel, swastika
cross
girdle, garter

head

two

initiation
of child
death of man

tree, stone
cave-mound
well
procession
transition
purification
contest
initiation of youth
sacred marriage
death of youth
sacrificial meal
food, wine

tree, stone
cave-mound
well
procession
transition
purification
contest
initiation of child

death of man
sacrificial
meal

Chapter 7

THE LEFT HAND AND THE RIGHT; AND NEITHER

Christians have fairy tales too: not the core of our belief, but an ornamental twining which, like the Celtic sacred oak leaves framing the page of a medieval manuscript, employs the old arts to convey new insights. St. George instead of Marduk fights the dragon of the underworld; St. Michael spears a dragon-devil who, elsewhere in medieval art, boils people in pots; St. Christopher, once dog-headed like Anubis of Egypt, priestlike carries the Christ Child across water to a new stage of existence.

Sometimes old legends and old festivals, embalmed together in Christian tradition, beautify the church calendar. At Saintes-Marie de la Mer, isolated in the marshes of the French Camargue, a festival is celebrated twice a year in which cave, spring, severed head, games, races, feasting, the crossing of water, a triple goddess figure, and ideas of death and rebirth significantly figure. In late May and late October, the relics of two of the three Marys for which the place is named are taken in procession from the church and enjoy a boat ride on the Mediterranean; when they come back, there is feasting, dancing, horse racing and bullfighting.

Under the chapel and choir of the Marys' church, in the crypt, lie an old sacred spring, cave, and standing column. Here excavation in 1448 unearthed a characteristic Celtic sacrifice, the head of a man bound with a strip of lead. The remains of two bodies were also found, instantly baptized as "the two Marys." For the story which long before had sanctified this shrine told how three Marys—the Virgin's sister, the mother of James and John, and Mary Magdalen—arrived at Stes. Marie in a boat along with Lazarus, the head of St. James the Great and the heads of those child-sacrifices, the Holy Innocents. Mary Magdalen left almost instantly for Ste. Baume, the

Celtic sacred grove and grotto where she is supposed to be buried; but popular tradition lost no time in creating a new trinity by adding Sara, black servant of one of the Marys who swam out to the boat at the last minute.

Sara's black image, now enshrined in the church too, is an object of special veneration to the gypsies who throng to the festivals and help carry the saints' boat in spring: they hang rags on Sara's statue for healing and say she is Kali, the black goddess they once worshipped in India.

Now this is a very odd ceremony, and the longer you think about it, the odder it gets. Stes. Marie is a very old sacred center: Celtic certainly, perhaps earlier, perhaps a thousand years earlier. The severed head is a distinctively Celtic decorative motif, but cave and spring are hard to date and the three Celtic goddesses, the "Mothers," may simply have superseded three from Ionia or Tyre or the Caucasian steppes. Sometime in the Dark Ages the site, its worship and its legend were Christianized; about that time temples became churches and pagan gods saints in astonishing numbers and with astonishing expedition all over Europe. But history then demands that we envision a troop of gypsies appearing about the fifteenth century, when gypsies first came into Europe, and—after a thousand years of Christian worship there—demanding a share in the festival so that they can worship Kali! And priest and populace agree!

What happened? Imaginatively, we can just perceive that in the context of St. George and the Turkish knight, Moors and mock gypsies sharing in festivals all over Europe, the townspeople may have accepted the participation of true gypsies with tolerance—maybe even a sort of sneaking pride. And to the gypsies, sharing a festival came naturally—in their native India are there not still castes and guilds "of the left hand" and "of the right" with separate but complementary religious duties? And do these not include faction fights like those of Irish festivals which are simply that of St. George and the Turkish knight on a larger scale? . . . But even so, the event implies a complex and common cultural context for both gypsies and Stes. Marie extending back more than a thousand years.

A leap in the dark: was all Europe once, perhaps, divided into "men of the right" and "men of the left" like India? Can it be that Europe, India, Babylon, Egypt, knew the counterpart, in the early days, of tribal "moieties" of today—cities, countries, divided into "left half" and "right half," each with its own animal totems, identified with underworld and upperworld, summer and winter?

An intriguing question, and once it is asked, the evidence for a yes answer is overwhelming.

Prior to the establishment of the First Dynasty, neither archaeology nor documentation reveal that Egypt was anything but a collection of scattered villages. Yet when the First Dynasty creates one country, Egypt, amoeba-like, it instantly becomes two. Egypt is both Upper Egypt (up the Nile, south) and Lower Egypt (the northern delta). Each has its own gods; the Pharaoh wears two crowns, one for each half of the kingdom. The state granary is double, one half for south, one for north; the palace had separate state doorways for Upper and Lower Egypt; every temple, even every temple room, had a "north half" and a "south half." Why? The legend of Egypt's founding makes it clear: Egypt only became one by the melding of two, when Horus and his "blacksmiths" battled Set's "pillar folk": and these two original segments of the Egyptian nation represent not only black man and warrior, like St. George and the Turkish knight, but also the directions north and south, left and right.

Sumer also had its gods of north and south: Ea, god of waters, reigned over the southern sky and Enlil, king god, over the north. On land the distinction held too: Ea was god of Eridu in the south, Enlil of Nippur in the north, while Anu, god of the center sky, was worshipped at Erech, halfway between the two.

Caesar, as every schoolboy used to know, said "All Gaul is divided into three parts"; but he also reported in *Gallic Wars* VI xi-xii that there were "two factions" in Gaul, "not only in all the states and in all the cantons and their divisions, but almost in each family." It sounds rather like an early version of the two-party system, but it is in Ireland, never conquered

by the Romans, that we see what such a two-party system really implied: a cosmic dichotomy which contrasted north-south, summer-winter, upper and underworld, castes, functions and even means of aesthetic expression.

The north of Ireland was the "half of the head," the upper class; the south "the half of the servant." Law, war and cattle 'belonged' to the north, the south was associated with beauty, purity, hospitality, females, serfs, and the world of the dead.

Myth tells us that this original north-south division occurred at the founding of the Danu kingdom in Ireland, when the brothers Eremon and Eber quarrelled over the kingship and seven chiefs went north with Eremon, six south with Eber. Six plus seven equals thirteen, a number often used to stand for the year of thirteen lunar months; so these numbers also represent seasons of the year. And in Ireland's great epic of the north-south struggle, the *Tain bo Cualaigne*, the south (winter) wins victory after victory till spring comes, when the tide turns and the north is victorious—but only until November 1, Samhain and the beginning of winter, when the south takes its revenge.

During the Eremon-Eber quarrel, the Druid Amergin suggests another solution to their rivalry: an alternating kingship for the two brothers. This solution was actually adopted elsewhere. At Arvad and Tyre in Phoenicia, and in Greece, there were alter-kingships, while Sparta had two kings at once; and the idea that a kingdom must have two halves is significant in the history of all kingship. In theory every realm must have two kings, a "summer king" and a "winter king"; but in practice the dual and alternating kingship are productive of constant conflict. Accordingly other solutions are found: the king is symbolically double, like the Pharaoh with his two crowns; or "summer king" rules but at his side stands always the figure of the "winter king"—vizir, priest advisor or King's Fool.

Geographically, dualities like Egypt's are almost universal: Wales, for instance, had a north half and a south half and, as in Egypt, those of the south were "men of the right hand" and the north "men of the left"—an idiom which we still use in reverse when we call a left-handed pitcher a southpaw.

In *Celtic Heritage* the Rees point out that "In Wales as in Ireland, and indeed in France, Germany, Egypt, Israel and India, the main division is into north and south . . . The division of society into moieties symbolized as upper and lower, heaven and earth, male and female, summer and winter, senior and junior, north and south, right and left, and so on, is world-wide, and the dichotomy is expressed in a twofold division of countries, provinces, cities, villages, temples, halls, kindreds and other phenomena. Often there are two kings, or a senior king ruling over the whole realm, but particularly over his own half, and a junior king over the other half.

"The superiority of the one moiety over the other is, however, formal and ritualistic rather than political, and it is often the case that the lower in status wields the greater power. The two halves have distinct and complementary duties and privileges and they perform various services for each other" (like the gypsies and the men of Stes Marie) "but there is also an antagonism between them" (like France's festival Moors and Christians) "which manifests itself in mock conflicts, team-games and other contests. Such an organization seems to underlie the common division of Welsh cantreds into 'above' and 'below' the wood, or 'above' and 'below' the river. 'Great' and 'little', 'within' and 'without', or 'upper' and 'lower' are commonly used to differentiate between two neighboring villages of the same name or to describe subdivisions of villages and parishes—and rivalry between the two halves is common." (171, 102)

But if all Europeans once had a moiety system, you say, (or would if you had thought much about it) why do the Germans appear first in history as *three* tribes—and the Scythians—and the Dorians—and the Romans, divided into three groups at the founding of Rome by Romulus—indeed the very word "tribe" means "three"? So it does, but a three division as well as a two is evident everywhere in the old system; it simply operates on a different plane. The "three-ness" springs from godhead and the age-class system: the Scythians said their three tribes were descendants of the three sons of the First God, the Greeks that the Dorians sprang from Hercules, Apollo and Demeter re-

spectively. And two of the three German tribes, the Irmins and the Ings, bear the name of summer and winter gods.

Within the three division, however, twoness continues to exist; and where the tribal divisions have east-west or north-south geographical territories the third tribe, as in Sumer, occupies the "center."

Moreover, as tribes evolve the caste system takes to threeness as well: priest, warrior, peasant, each with its own caste god. The Babylonians had peasants, warriors, elders; the Romans senators, patricians and plebes; the Celts, according to Caesar, Druids, equites and plebes; the Serbs of Saxony were divided into elders, horsemen and "stinkers," the commoners. The three class system is universal, and language makes it clear that caste triplicity springs from triplicity of age-class. Priest, senator means "elder"; "churl" and "child" are related.

So the patterned universe has two halves, socially and geographically; three age classes, three castes, and three divine figures; did four also have a special meaning? Yes indeed: let us look at Ireland in a later period: four provinces (Connaught, Leinster, Ulster and Munster), each with its own particular direction, caste and season of the year. Asked what were the traditional associations of the four quarters of Ireland, the sage Fintan replied, "Knowledge in the west, battle in the north, prosperity in the east, music in the south": west for priest, north for warrior, east for farmer, and south for minstrel or junior priest. This scheme the Rees compare to the "correct" layout of a royal fort as described in an early text of India. The houses of the four castes (the fourth being slaves, here as elsewhere after warfare became prevalent) are arranged around a temple-palace center, at the four points of the compass. North is for priests, east for warriors, south for farmers, west for slaves. The caste-direction association is different, but as the Rees note, the most interesting facet of the comparison is the fact that "in India as in Ireland, social classes have to do with the points of the compass." (131)

The parallel emerges even more vividly if we compare this Indian royal fort with its palace, temple and ale-hall center surrounded by the houses of the four castes, to Tara, seat of

the High King of Ireland. Here stood centered palace, temple and ale-hall surrounded by the halls of the four provinces at the four points of the compass: a pattern repeated within the ale-hall where the High King sat at the center table while the men of Munster, Connaught, Ulster and Leinster disposed themselves south, west, north and east around him.

Groupings of four townships characterized England too in the middle ages; Egypt, India and Sumer divided the world into its "four quarters"; south Wales was divided into four districts which met for festival at the sacred center. And cities in Persia, Etruria, the Roman Empire, Denmark, Byzantium and medieval Europe were laid out quartered, two main streets east-west and north-south crossing at central temple and palace: living images of the Greek cross, the swastika, the cross-in-circle which were themselves images of civic order, the World and the Year.

If, at this point, you throw up your hands and say, "I don't believe a word of it—nobody could ever possibly live that way," the complaint has merit. How indeed could human beings shape their lives from babyhood to dwelling place to tomb orientation (almost everywhere east-west) in correspondence with an ideal pattern? The truth is, they didn't. Connaught was not entirely inhabited by Druids nor were all northern Welshmen left-handed. Each Irish province had its own Druids, warriors and farmers. Peasants were not all children, though often treated as such, and not all old men were priests or vice versa. And though Herodotus says all of one section of Egypt was inhabited solely by warriors, he was probably misled by legend.

These "ideal" divisions did not work any more than the dual or alternating kingship did; but when convenient, or easy, or important from a religious standpoint, an effort was made to observe them. Paris had, and has, palace and temple at the center of the Ile de la Cite, but its sacred Maypole stood in the palace courtyard still termed the Court of May, its burial-mound was under Notre-Dame, its sacred spring on the other side of the Seine, and its crossing streets were not, because of the river, exactly oriented. In Seville and Granada the gypsies lived, and live still, on the "other bank" of the river from palace

or castle, but a lot of other people do too. North and south Ireland are still hostile, north and south France mistrust one another, but the reasons are not now, nor were they ever, entirely ritual.

Nevertheless, the idea that the world *ought* to fall into a pattern, a pattern corresponding to that of the gods above, was valid for several thousand years of human history; even the middle ages with its motto of "as above, so below," clung to the same concept. And it explains a good many peculiarities in our own cultural development.

For instance, numerology.

"Two," "three" and "four" divisions of the world emerge in a time parameter which corresponds to an evolution in astronomy. The earliest, non-scientific, view of the world is as two contrasting halves with a third unifying element: in natural terms, there are two seasons, and the year. Some time later and in some places (Greece, Germany, India) a three seasonal year was current, influenced on the one hand by the triple god structure, and on the other perhaps by double harvest: summer fruit, fall grain; or summer grain, fall slaughter—whence three-legged swastikas and triskeles.

But the four season year, which arrayed Ireland in quarters instead of halves, came from the discovery that the sky was quartered: two solstices, two equinoxes. The phases of the moon were also quartered: significant divine parallel! A seven day week emerged, and Chaldean astronomers discovered seven planets: another significant parallel! Babylon was not thereupon divided into seven instead of four districts; but it is true that ziggurats began to be built in seven steps and there were Seven Great Gods instead of three, each with his own planet—a pattern the Romans followed, so that Saturn, Uranus, Jupiter, Mercury, Mars and Venus are still with us.

Twelve and thirteen emerge next as sacred numbers in time and god reckoning. A year is thirteen lunar months or twelve solar ones (four seasons times three) and this twelve, plus one for the unity factor, makes thirteen also. So Greek, Etruscan,

Norse pantheons of twelve gods, Judea's twelve tribes, Dalmatian Gauls divided into three tribes of four clans each, and Plato's description of the City of Athens as it ought to be, appeared in consonance with the heavenly twelve above. Athens, said Plato, ought to be divided into twelve parts inhabited by twelve tribes each of twelve clans, the whole centered on the sacred Acropolis. "Now we must think," he says of this spoked wheel, "of each part as being holy, as a gift from God, which follows the movement of the months and the revolution of the All. So the whole state is directed by relationship to the All, and this sanctifies its separate parts."

As you see, the earth pattern evolves with the celestial calendar; and whether your version of Sleeping Beauty features three fairies or thirteen depends on the sophistication of time-reckoning in the place and period where it first took permanent shape. Greece has three Fates, in Spain the fairies are seven, in Egypt seven or nine (3×3 , or magic squared); and in Grimm the birth-fairies are twelve good ones and a wicked 13.

From these number patterns sprang, ultimately, Pythagoras, founder of a religious order which sought purification beyond rebirth, philosopher who defined the world in terms of pairs of opposites, odd-even, limited-unlimited, male-female, right-left and light-dark. But while describing mathematics as the principle of all existing things, Pythagoras also discovered that the sum of the angles of a triangle equals two right angles; how to solve a quadratic equation; and that the earth was round. So science sprang from the old religion.

For instance, history.

Historians have a persistent yearning to know exactly what happened "way back when"; and they get very frustrated when ancient documents tell them that Britain was founded by Brutus and other followers of Aeneas fleeing from Troy; that Cyrus of Persia was raised by a she-dog; that Ireland was colonized by five successive races, some of whom had only one foot and one which was labelled "Scots from Spain"; or that Marko Kraljevic, Yugoslavian hero who died in 1394, was born of a fairy, killed his brother, and fought a three-headed dragon.

None of these accounts, of course, is *literal* history. Nevertheless, there is a truth of sorts in each, and history can be separated from myth once you know what myth is.

Take, for instance, the colonization of Ireland. The Dinnsenchas lists five waves: one-footed Fomorians, the Partholans (the "Scots from Spain"), the Nemedians (who emigrated from Ireland to Scotland and back again), then the men of Danu, and the Milesians, said to be from Greece. Now these one-footed Fomorians are obviously mythical; and when we hear they defeated the Nemedians and forced them to pay tribute at Samhain, we can be sure we are hearing of traditional summer-winter battles. The Men of Danu, too, were said to have defeated that subject race the Firbolgs on May 1, and lost to them November 1; but that Fomorians and Firbolgs did not exist, or existed only as a "half" of Ireland, does not invalidate the Partholan-Nemedian-Danu invasion sequence.

And, myth removed, there are curious bits of truth all the more trustworthy in that they correspond with other scientific evidence. These "Scots from Spain," for instance: archaeology confirms that megalithic settlement moved steadily north along the Atlantic coast from Spain to Brittany and Ireland. "The Nemedians moved from Ireland to Scotland and back again": Scotland was certainly settled by a Celtic race and migrations back and forth have in fact been frequent. "Nemedian" means "men of the sacred grove" and is a religious, not a political, description; but linguistically both "Danaans" and "Milesians" do suggest a late Mediterranean connection, confirmed by trade routes.

Or consider Cyrus and Marko. Nursing bitches and three-headed dragons do not exist, agreed. Nevertheless each of these stories tells us something important: that fosterage and initiation were "real" enough experiences to be applied to living or recently living people. The life of the king or the hero *must* conform to the pattern established by the gods, so Cyrus had to be raised in the woods far from home by a figure from the underworld. What is really surprising is to find the same mythwork evolving about the figure of Marko in 1394 in a nominally

Christian Yugoslavia, and any historian who doubts the persistence of pagan belief would do well to study it.

Marko's dragon is an anomaly in the fourteenth century, but his fairy ancestress isn't. Even today in India many minor royal families are said to have the distinction of springing from a "naga," a serpent-woman; in medieval Europe it was equally chic to have a pagan underworld ancestor. Greek nobles boasted of nymph parents, every Danish aristocrat was ultimately fathered by Odin, Charlemagne descended from a fairy lady, the families of Mathay and Russetum in France had siren ancestresses, in Ireland the Earl of Desmond had the lake-dwelling goddess Ana in his pedigree. So far did the thing go that the Sforza invented their own mermaid-ancestress to bolster up their noble bearings.

This was not an exclusively medieval fashion. Freyr was said to be ancestor to the Ingling kings of Sweden, Hercules and a serpent-woman fathered the Scythians, and the kings of Thrace had Mercury as forebear. The curious thing is that divinity appears to pass into noble blood not through the king and queen god, as you might expect, but the god and goddess of the underworld. Yet the pattern is invariable: the dynasty of Kish and Wenceslaus of Bohemia have the same "love goddess" ancestor, the one a brother-keeper, the other a girl from a dubious "bathing establishment."

"Britain was founded from Troy," says Geoffrey of Monmouth, and nobody believes him. If we say instead, however, "Britain was founded, like Rome, by celebrating the Troy game," it makes perfect sense. *All* foundings are celebrated as if they were spring festivals: coronations, weddings, kingdoms. Memphis in Egypt celebrated its founding anniversary by a festival battle between "Set and Horus," Aeneas founded his kingdom by a Troy game and spring festival. The Irish play "The Building of the Fort" shows us a mock mass combat followed by a duel, the death of one duellist, and his revival by a Doctor: a script identical with that of the St. George play. The logic is impeccable and continuous since the Marduk-dragon battle in Babylon brought Order out of Chaos: to es-

tablish a civic order, you must repeat the original transition ritual which brought "this world" out of underworld darkness.

So myth reshapes history—which does not mean that history is not, sometimes, actually changed by myth. When Harold the Saxon was shot in the eye at the battle of Hastings, his followers fled the field, leaving it to William the Conqueror. The terror that seized them, however, may have been a superstitious one. Harold losing an eye like Odin, changed in an instant from king to one-eyed god of the underworld—was it not the clearest possible sign that the gods meant to transfer dominion from Saxon to Norman? Some years later William's heir William Rufus was shot by an arrow while stag-hunting: a ritual death in the manner of Tammuz, Krishna or Llew Llaw Gyffes. That the death had these ritual connotations need not make us doubt that it actually occurred. The connotations, however, do explain why the death made such a powerful impact on the popular imagination, and why, when the tower of the cathedral under which William's tomb lay fell down, the collapse was immediately attributed to William's unchristian magic.

For instance, sociology. Why is the press called "the fourth estate"? Why does a cardinal wear red, and a bishop a two-cornered miter? Why does every bridegroom require a "best man"? Why do Masons hold a second separate funeral for their members?

That the "fourth estate," applied to the press, signifies they are a peculiar lot we all recognize; but who are the other three "estates"? Consult your history of the French Revolution, when the "three estates" met to make a new constitution and ended by deposing Louis XVI: they are the nobles, the clergy and the people, the same three classes which have made up the world since history began.

As for bishop and cardinal, even in Druid times there was within the priesthood a triple division of rank which corresponded to the three-caste system in general; and priest, bishop and cardinal represent these three ranks in the Catholic hierarchy with the symbols appropriate to each. Priest in black with his three-cornered hat is equivalent to winter-peasant; bishop in two-horned miter to summer-ruler; and scarlet car-

dinal to winter-priest. Doubtful? consider then the Pope in triple tiara like the Cretan underworld goddess, and his title of "pontifex maximus," chief bridge-builder, which means not that he is or was a mason, but that he is chief magician and builder of bridges—water-passages—to the other world.

The Masons tell us their guild began in Egypt long ago, or that their founder was Hiram of Tyre, architect of Solomon's Temple. Mystical myth? yes, but like mythical history, the bones of truth are in it. Guilds existed in Egypt, India, ancient Crete, Rome, France, England, Germany: guilds of craftsmen, of course: but the historical gap between the last of the craft guilds in England and the founding of modern Masonry to carry on the craft guild's "spiritual teaching" is narrow. In France, in fact, the two kinds of guild overlap.

What historically, was the craft guild's spiritual teaching? Secret, and not to be revealed on pain of death: but the rare glimpses we get of it reveal festival observances twice a year in spring and fall; initiation of new members in a mock death ceremony; stages of spiritual progress; a "communion" ritual; canes or staffs as emblems for apprentices; and the election annually of a "king" or "prince." Most significant of the nature of guild teaching, perhaps, is the constant and unrelenting hostility of the church toward it: guilds are charged again and again with performing rituals in which there was a "sin of sacrilege, impurity and blasphemy" (*Collection des Documents pour servir a l'Histoire de France*, v. 9, 473-81), guild members were forbidden to maintain private chapels or hold banquets; and the church declared as late as the 17th century that journeymen who belonged to guilds were in mortal sin.

Today, the Masons are still ruled by three officers, junior and senior warden and master; and this triplicity of authority is paralleled by, and compared to: the sun at noon, the setting sun and rising sun; south, west and east; beauty, strength, wisdom; birth, life and death; and first, second and third degrees, while the lodge itself is a microcosm of the universe.

In the Grange, offspring of Masonry, three ladies govern, Flora, Ceres and Pomona, spring, summer and fall; new initiates are led blindfolded through darkness and "hazards" to

the bosom of the agricultural clan: how old are these customs? The scholar pooh-poohs the filiation they themselves trace, Grange to Masonry to craft guild and the craft guild, as the statutes of one early English guild has it, to "time whereunto the memory of man runneth not." Yet is not all our history ultimately oral, "what the man said" passed on from father to son, priest to initiate, guild to guild, until it ultimately surfaces in document? The first guilds in Europe were not craft guilds, but guilds of the whole community: the village, the tribe itself structuring, organizing, festivalling in terms of its age-old tradition. And, exactly as in Greece, when community worship and initiation fragmented in Europe under urban pressure, the craft or the religious or the festival guild emerged to carry on under private auspices rituals which were once rituals of the whole. Between Phallophori of Greece and the medieval French Company of Fools there is no difference—each is a private guild formed to carry on festival as it ought to be; and when English craft guilds take on the responsibility for May or Corpus Christi festivals they, knowing only that "this is how our fathers did before us," accept the weight of centuries, even millenia, of ancient worship.

The Masons' symbol is still the square and the triangle—the "four" of this world and the triangle of divinity—that eternal triangle which, simultaneously, explains the "droit du seigneur," courtly love, and the Best Man at the wedding.

The "droit du seigneur," the right of the manorial lord to sleep with his peasant's bride before her husband does, shocks and puzzles medieval scholars: it is probably, they say, some sort of barbaric pagan survival like the custom whereby young men of a village take a bath in front of lord or chief—and in fact both have to do with spring ritual, initiation and mating. Even so short a time ago as the last century in Brittany the shadow of the same custom survived: the first night or nights of the wedding were "St. Joseph's," free of sex and reserved, as the saintly reference tells us, for some sort of divine cohabitation.

Why?

The May festival sets the scene. We have two ladies here,

and two gentlemen: spring youth and maiden, summer king and queen who are married householders: and in ritual, the Lady of both seasons is often played by the same person who (like Isolde, or Guinevere) has both lover and husband. The actuality of the lover's rights is attested by a host of documented and surviving customs: the Teutonic, the Fianna claim to all the young unmarried women, the "spinning parties" of Eastern Europe, May festival sex in the woods in medieval England and France, bundling; the husband's rights are just as indisputable. Whence the time-honored belief that a "proper" mating needs two partners, each standing for one of the gods of the year, youth and adult "husband." Hence also the fact that the old emblem for cuckold, the two horns, is identical with that of royal god and married man. Seigneur, St. Joseph, have rights to the bride as strong as her husband's: as the "other god," they sanctify her fertility; and every husband is inevitably a cuckold, since his wife belonged to the youth lover before her mate—even when, as often happened, lover and husband were the same person in two roles.

Now consider another famous literary trio, the Lady, her Lord, and her Troubadour. Literally gallons of ink and uncountable reams of paper have been expended on this tantalizing threesome. "It is obviously ridiculous, mon cher collègue, to suppose an intimate relationship of any kind between lady and troubadour—the middle ages had an absolute passion for chastity, as chastity belts attest." "Then how, estimado senor, do you account for the fact that he is singing love songs to the lady at all—some of which, may I remind you, praise charms certainly not visible in the ordinary way?" "Ahem! Gentlemen, Platonic idealism, I fancy, might account for that: the Ideal Lady would presumably have ideal . . . what-nots?" "Platonism aber nicht—unless you postulate einer christianische Platonismus—consider how he kneels at her feet, sings songs to the Virgin in the same terms, the same meters, it is a kind of Lady-worship, ein ewige-weibliche-Anbetung." "Oh, come on, fellows, what kind of Christianity is this if he can't tell the Virgin from his girl friend? And when an Aquitanian lord throws his wife's troubadour down a well, you can't tell me

there isn't something fishy going on!" Then we get down to the nitty-gritty of twelfth and thirteenth century scandal—was Vidal's mistress really a wolf-lady? Did Ramon de Castel-Rousillon really make his wife eat Guilhem de Cabestanh's heart? and was Frau Minne just a general nom-de-plume for the particular lady the German troubadour worshipped, or an earlier day Maja Desnuda?

Aha! with Frau Minne, the German minnesinger's equivalent of the Provencal troubadour's lady, we stumble at last upon a network of significant clues. Painters as well as poets have idealized Frau Minne, and they paint her indeed as a Naked May, nude and seductive, entwined in her long hair like Botticelli's Venus. She lives in the woods, riding on wild animals and accompanied by a court of Wild Men.

Her pagan ancestry is therefore unimpeachable: she is a direct descendant of wild woman underworld goddess Berchta. And her Wild Men are the Wild Hunt, the youths in training. These adoring figures which surround her, however, have a lively and separate existence in German art: on marriage caskets, in tapestries, the Wild Man is a suitor who passionately pursues the object of his love until she "tames" or "chains" him in matrimony. Sometimes he has a "knight" as his rival; sometimes, collared, he *becomes* a knight.

This eternal triangle of Love Goddess, Wild Man who like the troubadour adores her, and "knight" or husband, is the German version of the French Lady, minstrel and Lord. Wild man and poet represent the youthful lover, the husband the lord of the land and of marriage, and the Lady herself Spring and Summer in one who unless she is, like Demeter on the new-ploughed field, twice mated, cannot extend her divine fertility to the soil. Chastity begins at home, but cannot be allowed to interfere with getting the crops in; and if a little sprinkling of poetic pollen every so often on his Flower is going to keep the peasants happy and convinced he is the Lord Almighty in person, why should her Seigneur object to a little license, especially when it is normally merely literary?

The best man's privileges are neither literary nor licentious. Name and presence both, nevertheless, attest to an ancient

triangular tradition; and his particular right to kiss the bride is the last echo of the young men's claim to all the unmarried maidens. The wedding today, in fact—yours, your son's, your daughter's—is the moment when your life is most certainly captivated by the spell of a past worship, the magic of an old pagan rite of passage.

The night before the wedding, the groom "must have" a bachelor dinner, farewell to his old state and his old age class. In the morning the bride arrays herself in white—the chaste pure garment of May festivals of transition everywhere; she dons her veil, whose shrouding and flowers echo the adornment of the May goddess (veiled Isis, Demeter, Flora) and picks up her bouquet. If she is a traditional bride, she will slip on one blue garter—that garter the Queen of the May used to award to the winners of May games and races in England and Ireland—and her father will gift her a necklace as token of her coming maturity.

Attended by her Maid of Honor and bridesmaids, flowery nymphs who exemplify her old age class and play Flora to her Juno, she walks to the altar, where three men await her: the young best man, the groom-husband, and the saintly priest god, dressed in the appropriate black or red as the case may be. Sacred place is all around her: stone altar, fountain-font and crypt; and she navigates the "nave" (boat) as the Stes. Marie their sea-passage, proceeding in space as in metaphor from the season of flowers to the ripe summer whose emblem is the circle—the ring she will receive at the altar marking her goddess of house and land.

Laughing and joking, wedding guests now troop to the reception-banquet: shivaree and toast to the bride enshrine the old tradition of satire and mocking at transitions. The display of wedding presents too marks the gift-giving and awarding of tokens characteristic of all rites of passage. (The bride's closest friends have already "bathed" her, like Nertha, Bhavani, Rhea at their spring festivals, by honoring her with "showers.")

The drinking of wine and eating of a special cake permits the couple's communities to share in the sacredness of the occasion; musicians, like the old troubadours, serenade the bride

with romantic music. In old Bavarian custom the youths of the village, "straw boys" dressed in red, used to waltz the bride around and take joking liberties with her; today, more soberly, ushers and best man claim no more than a dance, a smile, or a kiss.

At last, farewells about to be said, she throws her bouquet and there is a scramble, as there was at Irish May festivals and French ones for the gifts of the May goddess of the moment: at issue here is who will be the new May Queen, who next in sequence to be married. On departure, there is more festival noise-making, throwing of multicolored festival confetti and ribbon; and, at last alone, the groom will "carry his bride over the threshold," the invisible frontier of passage from maidenhood to wifehood, not a hundred years ago still in some French communes enacted by the groom's carrying his wife over a stream. Start to finish, an accurate echo of the "sacred marriage" of Babylon five thousand years ago, a rite of passage laid down by the gods before the gods wore the names of Christianity.

Chapter 8

(OR 7 + 1)

So, through the magic ways of fairytale, we have come upon treasure: the pattern of ancestral belief which up till today no one has ever stumbled upon.

Duality and contrast: the two halves to everything sundering animals, birds, plants, seasons, days, directions, clothing, tools, weapons, professions, villages, countries, yet conceptually linked by a third category of “and or neither,” the universe and the year;

Three gods, three goddesses, three age classes, three social classes, three realms of earth, heaven and underworld;

All separating and interweaving every activity of the day and every day of life’s cycle in a pattern at once elemental and extremely complex, whose meshes let escape not even a beetle, a berry, a ball game, not even the gingerbread man whom to this day you cook and eat at Christmas in memory of an ancient sacrifice.

What an extraordinary idea! as if, brushing our teeth in the morning, swiveling screws at the assembly plant, or reading the evening paper, we knelt consciously or habitually to a god of each moment: Hygeia for health, Goibniu for metalcraft, or Thoth god of writing! Extraordinary—and extraordinarily comforting. Yet (despite “southpaw,” “the winter of his years,” marriages in June for matrimonial goddess Juno and “commencement” for graduation-initiation) can we believe it actually ever existed?

If it were the only instance in the world of cultural patterning, it would be hard to credit. Cultural patterning, however, is common almost (not quite) everywhere in the world, and while anthropologists are carefully not looking at Europe (perhaps because there are too many skeletons in the closet) they are finding moiety systems, festival systems, age classes and

sacred geographic divisions all over Oceania, Africa and Australia.

Sociologist Malinowski observed several decades ago that a tribe's myths and its social system were inseparable, so that you could not really understand one outside of the context of the other. If chief was god, for instance, he wore the emblems of the Chief God; if the Myth Hero ate raw poi and pretended to be a new-born baby at coming of age, then the new initiate ate raw poi and had to be taught to talk again. Whatever the specific pattern chosen, it applied both "above" and "below"; and most preliterate tribes, wiser perhaps than ourselves, believe that a man's life is meaningless unless it is embedded in the sacred.

More recently, less than twenty years ago, French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss pointed out that in his experience primitive societies are structures, and that these structures work in terms of "binary opposition." That is, everything in the natural world is classified in pairs of opposites on the model "day-night"; and this classification system extends not only to seasons, days, celestial objects, plants and animals but to such social and intellectual matters as age classes, clans, sleeping places, eating customs, geography and sex.

But this is exactly what we have been saying about early western culture.

Piaget, Levi-Strauss and other "structuralists" are interested in this phenomenon not so much for what it says about any given primitive tribe or, in Piaget's case, the primitive society of children, as in what it tells us about man's mind. Man, it seems, has an instinct to categorize his environment, and as structuralists Jakobson and Halle observe, the simplest way to do this is by similarities and differences: in other words by "binary opposition." Environmentally, certain very obvious opposite pairs (day-night, man-woman, wet-dry) impress themselves vividly upon the mind of the young child long before it understands the scientific context of either of the individual terms, offering a natural model for the later categorization of material which is in fact intangible (good-bad) or not intrinsically opposite at all (knife-fork). The thing is, categorization

of some kind is vital, both to make things "good for talking about" and to integrate man and his environment, to define his relationship to it; and lacking scientific "cause and result" skills, contrasting is the logical way for you to go about it.

Originally, this matter of mind may have had something to do with the structure we are talking about. The mind (the cerebral cortex) does have two halves which sometimes mistrust each other, sometimes work together; of which one dominates the other, and in which one half deals with music and mysticism, the other in words and rationality, just as the Dinsenchas says it does. No one can rationally suppose, however, that one half is naturally obsessed with tall hats, or that interred in one is the image "club" and in the other "war-axe." At this point the structure towers far above the unconscious; evolved and socialized, it has become a conscious system for analyzing the universe.

Can such a structure, however, survive for centuries after the men who use it cease to understand it, and the priesthood which taught it ceases to exist? Remembering the childhood game in which each party around a table whispers a phrase to the next to see what garble emerges at the other end, we would say no, and when drug researchers tell us there is a stage in drug vision at which images of "dark woods" and initiation testing emerge, we promptly babble of "archetypes." But we do not know what "archetypes" are, and the researchers themselves tell us these images are perhaps the expression of a longing for ritual no longer current in our society.

We possess a cultural heredity as well as a biologic one, and we are perfectly capable of sensing a gap, even though we cannot draw a map of the archaic whole. "Who is the Holy Ghost?" Christians ask one another; not so puzzled, the Middle Ages gave us Christ the Youth, God in white beard and a red tiara, and the Holy Ghost wearing a cross like St. George's; but even without their memories we know there is a question here that 'logos' cannot answer. "Snow White" and "The Three Bears" are the seedbed of every child's imagination and he, like the preliterate child, knows what a wolf is 'supposed' to be long before in zoo or dark woods he sees one.

Nine-tenths of our knowledge—knowledge we use nine-tenths of the day—does not come from books. How did you learn to: drive a car, tie a knot, play London Bridge, throw a ball, sing Yankee Doodle or Greensleeves, cross yourself, say, "I'm the King of the Castle and you're a dirty rascal," plant at the full moon, celebrate Christmas, shoot a partridge? That cap and gown means 'graduate', babies need christening, chokecherries are good to eat and nightshade isn't, that the fork goes on the left, it takes nine men for a baseball team, you doff your hat in church, to elders, and the female sex; what f - - - means; that men button right and ladies left, you feed a cold and starve a fever, and will get a stomachache if you eat green apples? Ninety percent of this knowledge is more than three hundred years old, and more than fifty percent of it is ritual.

Moreover this knowledge is more vivid and more memorable than anything you have read in Proust or the dictionary: memorable because of *context*. To each of these facts is attached an aura of social approval or disapproval: what we learn here will make us a friend, please a parent, cover us with glory, or bare the humiliation of our ignorance.

It is not, however, the structure of man's mind that interests us, but the structures it creates. Here, for instance, is a chart of what Levi-Strauss says about the cosmology and social structure of the eastern Timbara—how, in part, they categorize the world.

east	west
plaza	outside the plaza
sun	moon
day	night
dry season	rainy season
fire	firewood
earth	water
red	black

It is very like ours, isn't it? but not *exactly* like. In Europe, for instance, sun-moon are not opposed. There are three suns, rising, noon and setting, corresponding to the three age classes, and there may be three moons as well. "Fire" is not opposed

to "firewood" but to "lightning": fire and volcanic gods belong to the underworld, on the same side of the chart as "night," and lightning belongs to upperworld gods. Nor are red and black opposed.

What evolves from this is a categorization of structures, and of the cultures to which they belong, which may startlingly illuminate the history of mankind and its worldwide migrations. The Timbara's structure of binary opposites is *not* like ours; they did not borrow theirs from us or we ours from them; each evolved independently. Sumer, on the other hand, can be interpreted in exactly the same way as medieval Europe, right down to who wore what hat and what went on at the spring festival. Either, then, we shared a common cultural origin, or we borrowed our culture from Sumer. There are, in fact, Sumerian loan-words in Indo-European; but what happened when Indo-European culture met megalithic culture in Europe, when Chaldeans, Assyrians and Hittites superimposed hegemony on Sumerian territory, suggests something different. In each case, the conqueror's religion merged with what had gone before, and what we know of the close link between church and state, and religious hostility when underlaid by political considerations, suggests that this simply would not have happened unless all these religions were essentially the same.

Let's look at yet another culture—that of pre-conquest Mexico, which is enough like ancient Egypt's for some scholars to suggest that Egyptians colonised it. Aztec Mexico had a weaving goddess with a spindle, goddesses of flowers, maize and water; twin gods, one dark, one fair; sacred ballgames; pyramid-caves and offerings to springs; a god who is a snake god, a goddess of the green corn who like Osiris wears one green feather in her hair; twice yearly festivals, in May or December with 'eating of the god', that in May attended by young men in red and maidens in white, that in December featuring an image made with the blood of children. Points of resemblance; how many points of difference? In a chart of Aztec structure, how close would the parallel be to Europe? close enough to say, "These people belong to our cultural family—however this

migration came about, their ancestors and ours once lived side by side”?

Or how about this account from Sarawak of a sacred Dyak play: “One warrior is engaged in picking a thorn out of his foot, but is ever alert for the lurking enemy, with his arms ready at hand. This enemy is at length suddenly discovered, and after some rapid attack and defence, a sudden plunge is made at him and he is dead upon the ground. The taking of his head follows in pantomime . . . The story then concludes with the startling discovery that the slain man is not an enemy at all but the brother of the warrior who has slain him. At this point the dance gives way to what was perhaps the least pleasing part of the performance—a man in a fit, writhing in frightful convulsions, being charmed into life and sanity by a necromantic physician.” (Cheney, *The Theatre*, 17-18)

Have St. George and his “brother,” the Turkish knight, really travelled all the way to Borneo, along with the Doctor? Are the Dyak headhunters distant relatives of Celtic head-collectors? Points of resemblance—how many points of difference? In a chart of Dyak structure, how close would the resemblance be to our own?

And we ourselves? are we what we think we are? sophisticated individuals maneuvering confidently in a technological society almost independent of god and nature? If we are, why is our culture falling apart? and why, as it crumbles, do we stubbornly plant beets at the dark of the moon, worship the Virgin Mary in defiance of a male Trinity, feel that a man is not a man unless he goes hunting and drinking with his age class, throw coins in fountains, offer our children’s teeth to a tooth fairy patron of children and encourage them to believe in Santa Claus—instinctively obedient to a tradition we know only by what our fathers handed down to us? If we were more conscious of the culture “in our bones” and the thirsts it has quenched for thousands of years, would we do some things differently? See a connection between juvenile delinquency and failure to initiate? Offer a more structured answer to the question “Who am I?” set sexual initiation in a sacred context? understand when our presidents are gods and when they are

not? perceive why reverence to age is essential to our own survival?

Perhaps.

AFTERTHOUGHT

In earlier chapters, we began with a fairy tale and ended with a specific and pervasive cultural pattern which may help to unravel the mystery of man's early society, his intellectual habits, and his world-wide migrations. But in everyday life we constantly encounter many other puzzles to which it can provide an answer. Who, exactly, is the Holy Ghost? why do we eat turkey at Thanksgiving and mince pies at Christmas? why are there three branches of government in the United States? who is Paul Bunyan? Harlequin? Why does every church have a font? Why does every Shakespearean comedy have a Fool in it? Why is the church calendar a grave-rubbing of the pagan?

In essence, the answers to all these puzzles have already been given. To show how they can be worked, however, we analyze in the pages that follow three such enigmas, one from everyday life, one from art, and one from drama. The three are:

What is a pack of cards?

Why is a unicorn?

Who is the Fool?

What Is a Pack of Cards?

Count them first: they are fifty-two. Curious—exactly the same as the number of weeks in a year. Four suits—four seasons? Is the card deck, as scholars have suggested for other games, a microcosm of the universe?

Two suits, one black, one red. We just said these two colors are not, in the west, opposites, two halves of the contrast, as they are with the Timbara; but sometimes in games they may be. Black and white chessmen on a black and red board, or black and red chessmen on a black and white board, alike represent a struggle between the "two halves" of the universe

which can only end with checkmate—"shah-mat"—the Death of the King.

Each suit has thirteen cards, number cards and three "face cards": Jack, Queen, King. If the suits stand for the seasons, it is natural that each should have its own sacred King and Queen.

But why a "Jack"? Will the name of the card in other languages give us a clue? In German it is "Bube," a boy; in French a "valet," a term coming from "valettus," once a term for youth in knightly training. "Jack" is also an ancient name in god circles—sobriquet for the sacrificial victim "Jack-o-Lent," descendant of the divine sobriquets of Dionysus, Iacchos, Jachim.

Is the Jack of cards young man to the King? Is that why he wears in his hat or carries a single feather; why, in two of the four suits, he is one-eyed; why he can always be "taken" by the King? Where did the idea of a Jack of cards originate?

Where playing cards come from is obscure: it is in fourteenth century Europe that people are first described, in the west, as playing cards. Some suppose the Crusaders brought them back from the near east, others hypothesize the gypsies brought them from India. In any case, the earliest western playing cards which remain to us are not bridge packs, but Tarots. They have four suits with numbers, King, Queen and Jack, plus twenty-one extra cards called "The Grand Tarots."

Each country interprets the original model, whatever it was, in its own idiom. An Italian pack will shape the Jack in the image of Hercules with club and lion skin, a German shows him as a "wild man," French cards are inclined to the pastoral. Regardless of nationality, however, two things remain consistent: each pack portrays the cycle of the year, with particular attention to festival; and cards, at first played only at festival times, are used as much for divination as for gaming.

It is a startling experience to enter the Tarot Room of the New York Public Library (which has one of the finest collections in the world) and pass from the formalized card of today to the card as story, the card as work of art, not only face but number cards brilliantly and colorfully painted: rare evocation of festival as the medieval artist imagined or remembered it.

In the spring cycle of a Jost Ammon set, for instance, we find a detailed festival sequence: the teasing of an Old Woman like the February Driving Out of the Old Woman at Arles; a man pushed into a tub of water in the mood of the "Butchers' Jump" at Nuremburg; two duellists kneeling at the feet of an umpire before beginning their sacred conflict; youth and maiden plighting their troth; a Lady of the festival with little dog and troubadour.

Peter Flotner's set of 1545 varies the idiom but does not change its meaning. The Old Woman kneels, surrendering her winter domination, before a young girl in scarlet and her youthful mate; a man in conical cap takes an initiation bath in a tub shaped like a ship; a young couple share a betrothal cup; peasant and wife dance around a May-tree. The spring conflict is treated in terms of the age-old boar and boar hunt idiom. A knight fights a boar while his Lady stands by; two young boars drink from a sacred fountain and indulge in a tug of war across a draughts board, its black and white squares symbolizing the two contesting halves of the universe. And—an archaic sacrificial image for so late a date—a man is shown tied by a festival garland to a roasting spit.

Festival—and sometimes sacrificial—imagery is just as clear in the fall sequences. Flotner's Tarots show us a man with two daggers in hand (two = summer king) tipped from his stool-throne by a priest in tall turban and red robe. Another male is assailed by a red goddess with a spindle. Ammon shows us a throned man too, dethroned by a club-carrying figure. Dying children lie at the feet of a King with a single black plume in his hat. A dead ass (both ass and goose are summer animals) lies by a priest Cook who is turning a goose in a spit: where at Christmas we eat turkey, Europe eats the summer goose. And a man in a three feather headdress stirs, on yet another card, a sacrificial cauldron. While Italian artists interpreted the Tarots in terms of their Carnival, with bedizened figures carried in parade chariots, the Flemish and German recalled a more primitive and authentic ritual: scarcely two hundred years before their first Tarots, men were acceptable festival sacrifices in the Teutonic world.

Clubs, spades, hearts, diamonds a cycle, black for winter-spring and red for summer-fall? Yes; less standardized than our present cards, the Tarots did not care what the suit emblem was as long as it was appropriate to the season. The "heart" evolved from the "cup" emblem of the priest god and his fall festival; diamonds were not originally diamonds in shape but summer circles, coins or rosettes; in one strikingly appropriate variant, we find the stag as emblem for this suit.

Spades belong to spring: the term comes from Italian "spada" a sword; and in some early suits we find the young man passing his initiation tests and receiving his sword as adult warrior. But in one German pack this suit is merrily adorned with wild men and wild women.

Our name for "clubs" comes from early suits in which the young man's club emblem was the number marking; but the contemporary shape of a "club" springs from others in which this suit marking was a trefoil, a clover, still St. Patrick's spring festival symbol today. And there were "club" suits adorned with winter acorns, hole-dwelling hares, triple ivy leaves, or lions.

Arcane the image, obscure the symbolism; but in the light of festival and cultural practice perfectly coherent. Whatever the suit, the Lady changes her costumes and emblems to those appropriate to the suit season; the Jack does too—but he is always dressed in "young man" or "priest" garb. The Valet of Bells in the Flotner suit carries a water pitcher and stands on a green snake; the Valet of Acorns, dressed in red, carries a wand with a dead spring hare hanging from it and, like the Valet of Bells, that phallic sausage which marks so many festival fools of the Middle Ages. The Valet of Ivy, in winter vein, appears as a Cook with a Cauldron, and the Valet of hearts stands in the old pose associated with Mercury in Greece, Rome and Egypt: a "shepherd" with a kid slung across his shoulder (kid = child in more than American slang).

It is in the Grand Tarots, however, that we find the most significant evocations of the old religion: the sacred site with fountain, graves opening so that the dead may return and seek rebirth, standing stone in the form of the Tower. Card char-

acters here are the Hanged Man of summer with circular emblems and sacks of grain, hanging upside down with his legs crossed like kings and judges in other medieval art; the juggler in multi-colored troubadour garb with conical hat and wand; the Pope and unchristian Popess in wand and triple tiara, images of the old summer, spring and winter-underworld pagan divinities.

Master of the whole pack is the Great Fool—twenty-second but unnumbered trump, ancestor of our modern joker: patron of children, who often appear with him; wand and hatted; master of knots like Ea of Sumer; priest god incarnate, card relative of the chess Bishop, who was also known as "The Fool." And in all guises he is master of transition—that transition which like our most popular card game today, is sometimes termed a "bridge."

Why Is a Unicorn?

What is a unicorn? Sometimes colt, sometimes goat, sometimes fawnlike, but always with one long horn emerging from his forehead, short and neat, or long and fleshy; pointed downward, in some medieval paintings, toward the Virgin's lap; an animal, folklore tells us, which can only be captured by a maiden guiltless of the touch of man.

A medieval invention: no. Greek Ctesias in 400 B.C. thought the unicorn existed and Babylonian art shows us something very much like it. Yet the only one-horned animal of this type in nature is the rhinoceros, and the unicorn does not look the least like a rhinoceros. Where, then, does he come from?

Ancient mythology and art portray only one animal anything like the unicorn and that is the Egyptian birth-goddess, who is part lion, part hippo, and part crocodile. The lion identifies her as a winter-spring underworld goddess; in that she is one with Tiamat, Marduk's female dragon of chaos, and underworld Ereshkigal of Babylon; and both of these, like the unicorn, wear a single horn in the center of their foreheads.

As early as Akkadian times, says the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the gods were given horns, "their number varying by rank":

One for the underworld, wealthy and wild,
Two for the twin-slayer, kingly and mild,
Three for the priest-god warder of child,

as an Anglo-Saxon scop might have put it. A fruitful place to look for yet more relatives of the unicorn, then, would be among the underworld's youths: and as soon as we look they are there plain to see.

A peculiar thing like a pointed horn was said, in Teutonic and Celtic myth, to have grown in the foreheads of Thor in his initiation battle, wild man Dietrich von Bern, and Cuchullain during his fight with the Boy Corps of Emania. These curious protuberances are echoed by the "tuft of hair" which Oisín, in Celtic "the fawn," young poet and denizen of the underworld, is said to have worn in the middle of *his* forehead; and this in turn echoes the forelock worn by Cretan boys of the Minoan age until they reached manhood—a lock, as archaeologist Evans describes it, "like a sprouting horn."

Honorius of Autun, however, writing in the twelfth century, disputes any such parallel between the unicorn and youth. The animal, he says, is Christ voluntarily giving himself up to his enemies and the capturing maiden (in our version the youth's maiden mate) is the Virgin Mary, his mother. If we take this at face value, we have Mary herself handing Jesus over into the hands of the Pharisees for crucifixion. Not, on the face of it, a very likely story—unchristian, in fact, as well as unbiblical; and if there is any truth in it, what is Christ doing plunging his horn into a stream in the background of an early eighteenth century picture of Aesculapius and Hygeia; or giving Death a ride in Dürer's "Pluto Abducting Persephone," or aiming his phallic horn where the Virgin's thighs meet in the painting of the "Symbolic Annunciation"; or ridden by wild men in Swiss medieval tapestries? Or—most surprising of all—turning up in Jewish and Chinese as well as medieval mythology?

The unicorn's Lady, not always the Virgin, is a famous and popular subject in medieval and Renaissance art. In Swiss tap-

estries she may be a wild woman; in Durer, she is Persephone; in the Lady and the Unicorn tapestries at Cluny she wears a single feather, a small single horn or braided topknot. She carries a mirror as emblem of transition, stands framed by spring animals (hare, fox, lamb, partridge, quail, green birds and white dogs) and weaves a crown of flowers. Ladies with crowns of flowers are not uncommon either in medieval art, and of them art critic Henri Martin says, "At the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries, one often in calendars sees spring, or more precisely, the month of April or May, weaving a crown of flowers." This Spring Lady is sometimes accompanied by a Fool or a waiting Ship of Transition; and very often, like the Unicorn Lady, by collared animals which she has tamed in the same way the Unicorn Lady has tamed the Unicorn.

Taming—what do mythology and festival have to say about that? Marduk in Babylon killed the dragon of chaos outright, that dragon wearing its unicorn horn; but St. Roman captured his by putting a girdle around its neck, and one tale says that St. George tamed his also by looping the princess' girdle (she was girdled like a bride for the dragon) about it. In Merano of the Tyrol in the nineteenth century they still played a spring "game" in which schoolgirls captured a "wild man" by enlacing him with a red ribbon; and a medieval German casket shows us a wild man chained by a lady, circled by an inscription saying, "I will be wild till woman tames me."

The casket, and a whole series of medieval Swiss tapestries in which appear ladies, youths in red and green, unicorns, boars, lions and dragons, wild and tamed, belong to a specific sort of art work: the art work as wedding gift, traditional present to a young couple on the occasion of their betrothal or matrimony. Art critic Gysin says of the Swiss tapestries, "Great emphasis was laid on their content, which in those days was read and easily understood by all and sundry, whereas we find a riddle in every detail." A riddle, however, which the equation unicorn = wild man = youth tamed by marriage can readily unravel. Supposing, for instance, we go to the Cloisters in New York and look at the most famous of all unicorn works of art,

the Unicorn Tapestries made for the marriage of Louis XII of France and Anne of Brittany. "An allegory of Christ," says a director of the Metropolitan Museum. Does that theory fit?

In the first tapestry of the six we see a group of dashing young men in caps preparing for the hunt, led by a long-nosed ancient Huntsman in red hat: a party very much like that of the spring Bear Hunt at Arles-sur-Tech. Flowing greenery, spring flowers, hares, squirrels, surround them: the season is unmistakable.

Tapestry two: the unicorn quarry appears in a curious pose: the hunters stand negligently in a circle around him while he kneels mirrored by a stream into which he dips the end of his single horn. The stream flows from a magnificent sacred fountain with phallic center upright—a fountain which also appears on the Tarot cards and in the Swiss wild men tapestries. On his side of the stream are a lynx, a fox, hares, and lion and lioness lying down together—an odd menagerie, all wild, all winter-spring animals. On the other bank, facing him, is a stag to which the hunters are not paying any attention either: the moment is ceremonial, not pragmatic. Identical ceremonial moments appear in the Lady and the Unicorn tapestries, where the Lady holds her mirror of transition up to the Unicorn; and in the Swiss marriage tapestries where unicorn and stag face and oppose one another. It is a moment of passage: from unicorn-youth to stag-warrior; transition through water and can it be that here in tapestry two the unicorn is symbolically "getting his end wet"?

Suddenly, the figures spring into action; in the third and fourth tapestries the unicorn leaps the stream, is caught, his flank pierced by the spear of the Old Huntsman in red, and bleeds from a fatal wound which is almost, but not quite, castration. A tapestry fragment then shows us Anne de Bretagne's sleeve reaching over a ceremonial fence-enclosure to grasp the unicorn's horn; the next in sequence shows us a brilliant court scene, Louis XII in a magnificent "spring king" costume of bonnet, red doublet, and striped red and white hose, accompanied by Anne and his nobles, standing before a Tower while the unicorn dies at their feet. Yet mysteriously, in the last

tapestry, the unicorn appears once more miraculously restored to life and health, collared and chained to a fruit-laden pomegranate-apple tree.

Now this is all very curious. If the unicorn *is* Christ, we have Anne de Bretagne capturing him for the Pharisees, and Louis acting Pontius Pilate, while the resurrected Christ appears in the guise of a tethered goat. Not very complimentary to the monarchs or to the God. But if we view the scene and the ritual through the lenses of a sacred marriage, how the perspective changes! Louis *is* the unicorn, "wild youth" tamed by the charms of Anne, dying to his old self, and reborn happily, royally, matrimonially tamed, wearing the collar of kingship and browsing contentedly in the shade of the fruited tree, emblem of the prosperity created by his sacred marriage and divine kingship. What prettier compliment could have been devised than to enact before him in art a ritual as old as the sacred marriage and kingly initiation of Babylon?

One other detail of the tapestries calls up an image as old as time: the puzzling and constantly recurring emblem of the knotted ribbon looped about a background tapestry tree. It evokes at once the "lover's knot" and "tying of the knot" in popular references to courtship and marriage; but it has links too to Anne's own order of "Ladies of the Sash," a society of noblewomen not unlike the Order of the Garter or the Collar of the Golden Fleece. Girdle, sash, collar are familiar emblems of nobility, and their meaning as confirmation of maturity or marriage go back to Greece and Rome.

Initiation, coming of age, and marriage are, however, inseparable; and the "sacred knot" of Anne's tapestries goes back to Sumer, where a knot about a pillar stood for the goddess Inanna, mistress of initiation, and as ideograph expressed "the gate to the byre," of passage from member of the "herd" in training to full manhood. Sacred knots tied to trees or pillars are part, too of Minoan sacred language as of the Egyptian "ankh," and four thousand years ago on a Minoan seal we find two lions chained to a pillar topped by knots: exactly the same configuration in which four millenia later the unicorn stands

in the seventh tapestry, looped to a tree which is itself looped by Anne's sacred knot of taming and matrimony.

The "riddle" of the unicorn tapestries is only one of many such riddles in medieval art, where the craftsman has wrought wonderfully, but no one now understands what he had in mind. Why does the "burial of the ass," or a jongleur, or a knight fighting a dragon, appear in church sculpture where one would expect only Biblical scenes? Why is every medieval nobleman's hall adorned with a tapestry of stag hunt or boar hunt? Why are the three youths of the Book of Daniel portrayed not in a fiery furnace but boiling in a pot? Why do medieval illuminators of the Trinity show Christ as a youth, God the Father as a white-bearded old man with a triple scarlet tiara, and the Holy Spirit with a cross on his breast like dragon-fighters, St. George and St. Michael? Why, of the "three kings of Orient," is one always white-haired, one middle-aged, and the third young and black? In Christian terms these images are incomprehensible: it is in the idiom of the old religion that they "belong" where they are and shape a meaningful pattern: the 'three kings,' the Trinity, are still being interpreted in terms of the three age-classes and their gods who were three, long before the birth of Christ.

Who's Playing the Fool?

"Dost call me fool, boy?" says Lear to his Fool in Act I of the tragedy; and the intricate interplay between mad king and sane jester is one of the marvels of Shakespeare's art. Yet it has precedent: kings had fools, and plays had fools, as soon as there were kings and plays in Europe. In the early medieval drama the fool is a tangential figure, singing songs, cracking jokes and doing acrobatics to entertain the groundlings; only with Shakespeare's *Touchstone*, Jacques, Bottom, does he become an integral part of the plot. But *why* do we find fools in these very diverse places—what is the connection between king's fool—the only person save the king allowed to sit on the throne—and the actor playing the Fool—a phrase which, in-

cidentally, in the American south means making love to a married woman?

The earliest documented stage fools of history are Hercules and Odysseus: heroes to us, but comic figures to the Greek playgoer. "Hercules Defrauded of his Dinner" was an immensely popular skit in the Attic theatre: glutton and thief, the demigod snatched food and, thwarted, had it stolen back from him.

On the surface, this rumbumptious horseplay appears to have little to do with Hallowe'en and the food raids of the German "Perchtenlaufen" or "wild herd" of spring festivals; but there is a connection. Stealing food to live off the land was (remember the Spartan boy and the fox?) part of the Greek youth training, and begging at spring or fall festivals, Hallowe'en trick or treating, has a similar ancestry. So already at the dawn of stage history, a curious parallel emerges between dramatic action and festival ritual. —What Odysseus did in Greek comedy we do not know, but his costume, like Hercules', was ritual: he wears the pilos, or pointed conical cap inseparable from our conception of the Fool, and a Roman fool figured on a painted gravestone at Cometo not only wears this same cap, but the multicolored costume common to medieval troubador, jongleur and Fool.

Greek stock characters underline the bond between festival and stage: Young Man, Young Woman, Swaggering Soldier, Old Woman and Old Man or Doctor are identical with the personae, the masks, of spring festival. And as late as Moliere, the Commedia dell'Arte is still playing with these same stock characters: an odd fidelity to tradition when we consider that today the drama seems perfectly able to do without any stock characters at all.

And what of the plots? These are "standard" too. Aristotle tells us that the drama evolved from the festival procession, and we can see it doing so: the *Thesmaphoriazusae*, for instance, is a play about a festival, the festival merriment is part of the stage action, and the plot is only incidental. The customary procession, sacrifice, Agon or conflict, and marriage or death of Greek comedy and tragedy copies a festival script. The *Bac-*

chae is myth and festival transferred directly to the stage, *Oedipus Rex* a personified autumn rite of passage.

Medieval drama wears the same festival stamp. The early European plays, episodic and traditional in content, evolve only slowly into three act dramatic structure, exposition, climax and resolution. Adam de la Halle's *Jeu de la Feuillée* is, like the *Thesmaphoriazusae*, a play about a festival, crammed with festival characters, and its impromptu action includes (like the Greek plays) a festival meal, a mating, a poetry contest, and a visit from the old pagan goddesses in the guise of fairies. In Roman times a popular play concerned the crucifixion of thief and master bandit Laurentius, and Catullus tells us it was sometimes climaxed by the actual crucifixion of a condemned criminal playing the part of Laurentius: the same kind of festival sacrifice which used to take place in Persia with a condemned criminal taking the place of the king. In the same way, snatches of the earliest medieval plays show us a Young Man eloping with the mate of an Old Man, a duel between Soldier and Youth, Soldier and Peasant, or Twin Brothers; someone falls into a tub of water or an Innkeeper takes an Old Man who wishes to become young again and pops him into a pot; someone dies and a tall-hatted Doctor brings him back to life again. One of the earliest German Carnival plays, *St. George and the Dragon*, treats of the same subject as the English *St. George Festival* plough-plays.

Sacred time and sacred place draw more tightly together festival and drama. In Greece, plays were presented only at festival time; but the same was true in medieval Europe. What occurs "always" and "only" at festival, like divination and card-playing, has a way of turning out, in ages past, to have been part of festival itself: and the Latin "ludus" has four meanings: a game of dice, a wrestling match or other contest such as takes place at festival; festival itself; and "a play."

The Greek play originally had as its stage a marble table, oddly reminiscent of an altar, or those stone dolmen-tombs of the megalithic age; and a burial mound, on or just offstage, is a common prop in the Greek drama, suggesting that the first plays were acted at the sacred site in front of the burial-cave.

The French law clerks of the Palais in Paris also used a stone table as their stage, perhaps identical with the "marble-stone" where the Fool performed at Paris festival in the Court of May where the royal May-tree stood. In the medieval village, the play is performed at the crossroads of the village center with its fountain upright and church; we may even find plays given *in* the church, on church porch, or amid the gravestones of the cemetery.

In Shakespeare's early days the stage was the inn courtyard where travelling troupes performed upon the "boards" of a temporary table. In this context, the history of the inn itself is significant: the early tavern is the "men's house" of the community, where festival celebrants resort to indulge in communal and sacred drinking, where guilds elect their "princes" and crown them with flower wreaths, where initiation mysteries, in Celtic myth, English and German tradition, customarily take place. In ancient Irish history the innkeeper was chief administrator of the community and the King's Council was called the Council of the Alehouse. Over the door of medieval or Roman inn stood the Bush or ivy cluster sacred to Bacchus, and still to this day an inn, if it is of any antiquity, bears as name and sign a symbol of the old religion: the White Horse idol of the Saxons, the Stag, the Blue Boar, the Green Man, the Dragon, the King's Head. Emphasizing the ancient connection between inn and festival play, the Innkeeper himself—sinister or jovial Cook or Priest—is a stock character in Lydian and Celtic story and in Roman or medieval comedy.

The personage of the King's Fool is rooted even more deeply in tradition than the Fool of drama. We think of the royal fool in connection with Charles II, or possibly at Spanish Renaissance courts; but in his multiple masks of dwarf, jester and counsellor the King's Fool goes back at least as far as Egypt of the Fifth Dynasty, when the Pharaoh kept pygmies from Africa to the south as court mascots. Roman emperors kept fools or dwarves; Tamburlaine kept a famous Fool and so did Harun-al-Rashid. Even the king of the wild Samoyeds of Russia had his court jester, and in the middle ages not only kings but nobles and city corporations, representatives in their own

realms of the summer king of civic order, felt it incumbent upon them to have an official fool at hand. John Lackland and the "Counties Palatine" had their jesters; the corporation of Lille hired its own "Fou de la Ville."

Interestingly enough, a fool is not always foolish. Like the Druids of many colors, fools may be poets or sages as well as entertainers. Tamburlaine's Si-Djoha was venerated as a saint after his death; Harun's Bahlul was an inspired poet-saint. In Indian drama the stock "fool" or "dwarf" was both a comedian and a Brahmin priest; and the Pharaoh's pygmies "danced the dance of Bes," the dwarf-god of merriment who like Hercules wore the lion-skin. Wizard Merlin in tale plays court fool to King Roderich, and even as late as the eighteenth century Germany's professors "moonlighted" by playing the fool at princely courts.

More ancient yet, in all probability, is our Festival Fool. Certainly we may date his existence from the Company of Fools at Hercules' sacred precinct of Kynosarges, trace his acrobatic skills through the Salii or Leapers of Roman festival, up through the middle ages with its Companies of Fools governed by Abbot or Pope, the Brotherhood of Acrobat-Fools, the High Prince of Folly and his Fool-Court, the Ship of Fools of German Carnival. Their chief task, as they appear in history, is to present festival: they are at once masters of ceremony and, formally or informally, the "Guild of Young Men" who were once the community youth class in training.

Wanded, capped and colorful like their brothers the Stage Fools, almost indistinguishable from that Company of Fools which was one of the earliest permanent comic troupes in France, they perform on a broader stage in more impromptu manner. They improvise satire on the community and its chief citizens for the civic benefit; they leap into fountains, sprinkle the bystanders with water; pinch the girls and make them blush; they collect "tribute" from foreign bachelors who want to wed town girls; thievish, they snatch and run, taking traditional liberties with order and modesty. They stage contests, aquatic battles, and parades in which they march with a Doctor

who is going to revive them after they are hanged; sometimes they even patronize contests of poetry.

Some suppose that the minstrels, jugglers, fools and troubadours of the middle ages are actually descendants of the Druids who, like the priests of Egypt who became jugglers and entertainers when dispossessed by the Romans, continued to make a living by exercising the more mundane of their traditional talents; sleight of hand, agility of body, and mastery of the once sacred tales and songs. Others, pointing to the long gap between the fourth century disbanding of the Druid order and the appearance in history of minstrels, acrobats and troubadours in the tenth and eleventh centuries, think the hypothesis nonsense. Yet we have so few records of *anything* during the Dark Ages that, watching the Great Fool perform at the Feast of Fools in France, we are tempted to believe the silence is just that, a silence and not a rupture.

Here he is, wanded, multi-colored and tall-hatted, leading his rabble rout into the church itself, monks lewdly pinching, nuns singing obscene songs dancing after him; he censures the cathedral with old shoes burning, wears the bishop's own robe, and gambles with the Dice of Destiny on the high altar itself. The church intervenes, but the clerics themselves protest at any interference with festival, which they proclaim ancient and healthy, "letting the folly natural to man escape once in the year." What trumpery figure would dare to profane so, had he not behind him a faith older than Christ and more powerful than the Pope?

Our three fools are identical; it is only that they operate in separate spheres: festival, art, and politics. The festival fool is the Youth or, as the Great Fool, priest; he displays his poetic and acrobatic talents as the old youth training class did at graduation, chases women married and unmarried; mock sacrificial victim, he is revived by a Doctor; occasionally he himself is Doctor or Master of the Revels.

The stage Fool is his offshoot, singing, juggling, leaping, making obscene remarks to women, eminently hangable, yet the spirit of the play itself, whose epilogue, prologue and com-

mentary he often gives. The Church recognizes his pagan origin, and forbids burial in consecrated ground to the actor.

The court fool is singer, jester, acrobat and sometimes sage counselor, wise man, and Master of the Court Revels. He does not make 'love' to the Queen—he leaves that to the troubadour—yet in another sense he is the King's double, sits on his throne, gets new clothes at Easter when the king does, treats the monarch with incredible familiarity. On the footstool at the king's knee, he is indispensable to the concept of Divine Kingship: he is the "other" king, youth-priest and winter-spring to the crowned monarch's maturity and summer: the "other half" of the universe without whose underworld collaboration the king cannot make fields bear and crops prosper. Here is the Basoche, that fool company of 1486, licensed by the court itself to complain even of the monarch Charles VIII: he has let weeds and mud, they say, block the course of that fountain the monarchy whose proper function is to "fertilize the kingdom."

Three identical figures in fool cap and motley: three lines of descent from paganism to its Christian posterity. And the survival of each intact to the threshold of the Age of Reason attests to the toughness of the old religion's roots, the persistence of its patterns, and the tenacity of its traditions.

The authors would like to express their appreciation, not only to the many scholars who worked in this field before them, but to George and Paulette Klin, Peggy Cameron Dorfman and Nancy Thomson Trueblood, whose long faith never faltered: This book is the outcome of more than ten years of study by William and Amy Marsland. It is intended to entertain as well as to enlighten, but there is matter in it for a thousand scholarly articles, and the authors will be happy to provide its thirty page bibliography upon request.

LIBRA PUBLISHERS, INC.
391 Willets Road
Roslyn Heights, New York 11577

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Amy (Downey) Marsland was born in Saskatoon, Canada; took her B.A. with High Honors at the University of Saskatchewan in 1944, and her M.A. and Ph.D. in Romance Languages at the University of Michigan, where she was a Rackham Fellow and winner of a major Hopwood drama award. She received her Ph.D. in 1950.

She has taught at Michigan State, Carleton College, and SUNY Binghamton, and has published articles for the *Romanic Review* and commentaries on French literature for "Cliff's Notes" series.

William Marsland was brought up in Mamaroneck, New York, attended Mount Hermon School and Cornell University, and after serving as a lieutenant in the navy, took his B.A. in English at Cornell after the war. He then entered the field of journalism, working for the *Mamaroneck Daily Times*, the *Caracas Journal*, Caracas, Venezuela, and the public relations department of the Federation Horlogere of Switzerland.

Since 1958 he has been president of Twin Valley Publishers Inc., a weekly newspaper group which now includes five papers. From 1966 to 1968 he also attended SUNY Binghamton and earned his M.A. with High Honors. He began the doctoral program but the growth of his business made it impossible to complete.

The Marslands are the authors of *Venezuela Through Its History*, Thomas Y. Crowell, 1954, which is a standard reference book in its field and which went into its second edition in late 1973. They have travelled extensively in Europe and Latin America.